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MODERN POETS OF FAITH, DOUBT, AND PAGANISM

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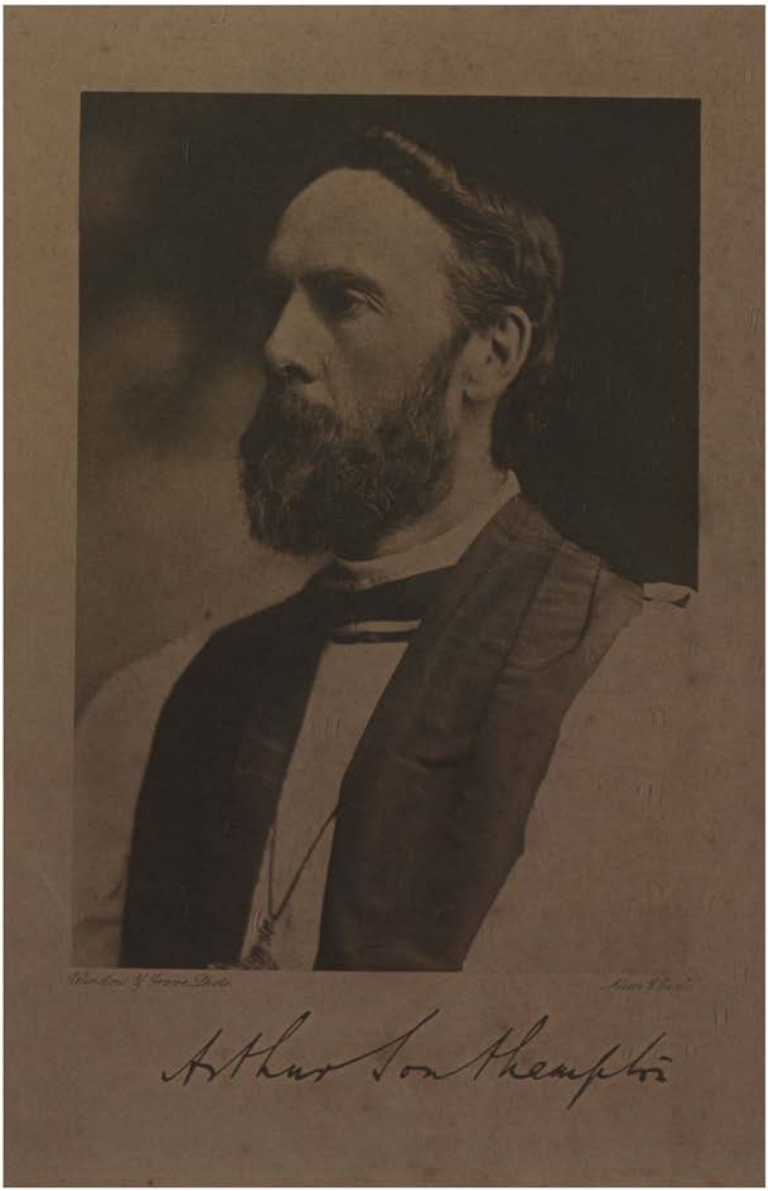

Arthur Southampton

MODERN POETS OF FAITH DOUBT & PAGANISM AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY ARTHUR TEMPLE LYTTELTON

SOMETIME BISHOP OF SOUTHAMPTON

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR BY

EDWARD STUART TALBOT

LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER

WITH A PORTRAIT

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PREFACE.

THE Essays included in this volume originally appeared in the *Church Quarterly Review*, and were—with the exception of that on Tennyson, which came out in 1893—written by my husband between 1878 and 1883, the period of his life when there was least pressure on his time, and when he was therefore more free than at any other to devote himself to those literary studies which were always among the chief interests and pleasures of his life. He never revised the Essays, and I have thought it best to leave them practically unaltered, in spite of certain anachronisms which the lapse of time has made inevitable. I may perhaps be permitted to relate that, when the essay on Julian was published, Mr. Gladstone was so struck with it that he wrote to ask the name of the author, and was answered by the Editor of the *Church Quarterly* in the words, "You have not far to look."

I should like to express my gratitude to the Bishop of Rochester for writing the Memoir which precedes the Essays at a time when his work was more than

usually pressing, and to thank those friends who have kindly contributed recollections of my husband's life and work. My thanks are also due to the Editor of the *Church Quarterly Review* for his courtesy in allowing me to reprint the Essays.

KATHLEEN LYTTELTON.

January 1, 1904.

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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

BORN JANUARY 7, 1852: DIED FEBRUARY 19, 1903.

I HAVE undertaken to record partly in my own words and partly in the words of others something of the character and mental history of the writer of these Essays.

He hated memorials and advertisements; but we owe it to ourselves and to what he was to make this much mention of it. For it may be confidently said that by his death his land and his Church have lost one of the strongest, best-furnished, and, so far as man may judge, best of her sons. There was much in him that would lend itself to an ideal description—the physical beauty of his manhood, the grace and variety of his knowledge, the strength and sanity of his judgment, the union of strong conviction with largeness of mind, the equal gifts for action and for counsel, the consistent success in all to which he put his hand; yet his personality was not one of those which take the world by storm—his influence, strong and steady as it was, was not of the magical sort. He was one whom every one could admire and respect, but not one who was quickly known, or whom many knew well.

He owed a great debt to circumstances, and he set his own stamp on what he received. Few of the sons of that noble generation of high-souled men and lofty loyalties with which the Victorian age opened began life under better auspices. He was the fifth son of a father—"the good Lord Lyttelton," as, to borrow the soubriquet of an ancestor, he may well be called—whose strong personality almost constrained to a high standard of living and thinking the lives of his eight sons—a brilliant scholar, Senior Classic at Cambridge, a bold rider, a man of exact method and capacity for business, and one in whom the virility of an impulsive and boyish nature and unfaltering submission to the discipline of religion produced a blend as rare as it was simple and spontaneous. The mother, Mary Glynne, a woman's figure on the horizon of his childhood of the most refined and delicate purity and beauty; the grandmother, Lady Lyttelton, *née* Sarah Spencer, the trusted governess of Queen Victoria's children, with all the distinction about her of the *ancien régime*, and not a touch of its coarseness or its contempt; the uncle, William Lyttelton, Rector of Hagley, brimming over with genial spirits and with intellectual and moral interests, full of the friendship and influence of Maurice, Kingsley, and, through Temple, of Arnold; all these formed a group of rare personalities whose influence remained with him through life, while to them was added, in what Arthur Lyttelton always called his second home at Hawarden, the great statesman, churchman, littérateur, theologian, his uncle, William Ewart Gladstone.

It is worth while mentioning that the library at Hagley, which the boys were allowed to use with what sometimes seemed to guests scant ceremony, was a room which stood nearly as it was left by the literary Lord Lyttelton of the eighteenth century, with his books, supplemented by modern additions, round the walls, and the portrait of the poet Pope over the fireplace. It was the sort of room which meant a good deal to boys with keen though undrilled mental powers. There was a sort of understanding that something "stiff" should be read some time in the morning—a task generally accomplished, if not always, it must be confessed, in attitudes characteristic of the typical student.

On his mother's side he was linked by descent with the Pitts and Grenvilles, and it is open to any one to trace the working of heredity in the keen political interest which went through his life, though as a clergyman he knew well how to restrain it from warping and absorbing him. Eton, by her direct instruction, did not do much for him: he spent there a bright and upright boyhood, held the traditional family place in the eleven, without the brilliancy in that line of brothers before and after him, but with a special power of his own in the field, and passed under the stimulating influence in pupil-room of that most original of tutors, William Johnson (afterwards Cory).

A nomination as Queen's Page did him damage which perhaps turned to gain. It prevented his throwing his interest into classical work. But this, which he regretted afterwards, perhaps left his mind more free to develop.

This pageship would in the ordinary course have led on to a commission in the Guards ; but his own inner bent, and, as it would appear, the beginnings of what he afterwards recognized as a true "calling," were too strong to allow of this. He asked his father's leave to forfeit the commission with its advantages and go to Cambridge with a view to ordination. Thus it fell out that he became later on a possibly solitary instance of a man who had been both Queen's Page and Queen's Chaplain.

The following letter from his contemporary and friend, Reginald Brett (now Lord Esher), shows vividly the manner of boy that he was at this time, and gives a glimpse of him as the stimulating influence of school companionship, working upon what the morals and cultivation of his home had put into him, prepared him to be the man that he was later to become :

"I knew him very intimately at 'My Dame's,' and afterwards at Trinity. Quite early at Eton he showed signs of the intellectual and literary gifts which distinguished him as a man. I am inclined to think that we boys appreciated or divined his capacity more quickly than the masters ; but on retrospect I see that we were not a wholly unintelligent set at 'My Dame's' in those days ; and being provided with an excellent library, it was the fashion to spend hours of an evening in political and literary discussion, tempered, I will admit, with a good deal of school and athletic gossip, always of such supreme interest in boyhood.

"No one of our little community, in dialectical

skill and in knowledge of English literature, especially of English poetry, was equal to Arthur Lyttelton.

"As a member of a large and argumentative family, he had come among us with wits prematurely sharpened, and with knowledge, acquired at Hagley, superior to ours; so that his power and influence were great.

"On looking back, I am surprised at the range which his reading as an Eton boy had covered; and we all of us owed much to his stimulating influence.

"Thus early he showed a taste for those ethical and philosophic questions of which he acquired considerable knowledge at Cambridge; and although along these paths we blundered rather laboriously behind, I possess letters from him which show that as a boy the instinct of the teacher was strong within him.

"He wrote, as so many boys do, English verse with a good deal of facility and taste, leaving in the hands of boy friends a few things of which his manhood had no cause to feel ashamed.

"From what I have said, some might think we were a set of young prigs; but this impression would be far from the truth, if Arthur were taken as the type of 'My Dame's' boys of that time. He was primarily an athlete, with the healthiest possible love of games, in which he had no mean skill, with a good honest quickness of temper, which he was prone to exhibit with characteristic vigour.

"Manly and honourable, he possessed as a corrective of somewhat precocious and superior intellectual tastes most of the ordinary faults of boyhood. He

had a healthy intolerance of ideas and persons, which doubtless in after-life, on reflection, and when the burdens of others were laid upon his shoulders, both as Priest and Bishop, helped to make him the kindly, tolerant man whom you knew and loved."

All this explains the paradox that the not very industrious or distinguished schoolboy should have been found what men did find him a little later.

His contemporary in Sidgwick's lecture-room and successful competitor for the first open fellowship ever offered in Trinity recalls, for example, how at Sidgwick's breakfasts "Lyttelton talked well and freely, usually about literature, and I thought him wonderfully well read"; and adds his recollections of a breakfast with the examiners after the fellowship examination: "The one thing they singled out for special praise was Lyttelton's English Essay. It was on Tennyson's *Queen Mary*, which had appeared only a few months before." One of them spoke of it as "a veritable *tour de force*."

It was when, in December, 1873, he came out as Senior in the Cambridge Moral Science Tripos (after study partly guided by Henry Sidgwick) that his mental power was first decisively shown. It was further proved and developed by some University extension lectures in the Potteries and elsewhere on the lines of his economic studies. "They were attended," writes Mr. James Stuart, who was then the heart and soul of the movement at Cambridge, "by a considerable number of working men, and were certainly successful in arousing more scientific thought on the subject."

This, with the habit early formed and never discontinued of a weekly modicum of journalism both in articles and reviews as a constant "parergon" to other work, added a great readiness and flexibility to his natural deftness of handling and soundness of judgment.

Meanwhile, his mind was now wholly given to his life's profession. After a year at Cuddesdon (which he thoroughly enjoyed and valued, and in which his presence made a great contribution to the intellectual life of the College) he passed with great happiness into the life of a Curate in lodgings, under Mr. Garry, at Reading. It was at once remarkable how congenially he fitted into pastoral work. The love of a parish never forsook him. Its magnetism drew him back in a few years from all the interests of a keen, alert, and leading share in Cambridge life, and even from the college which he had fostered into vigorous life. It was partly that his own instinct told him (what was true) that he could give himself out best under the stress of direct personal responsibility, not least in its homeliest forms. Certainly from Reading onwards each stage of his career, at Selwyn, in Manchester, and as a Bishop, showed the power of his strong dutifulness in overcoming natural reserve and a certain constitutional dislike to effort, and in drawing out, in rich and mellow abundance, the resources of his help, sympathy, and counsel. To those who knew him well, it was a great witness to the wisdom of Him who endowed His Church with a ministry, and to the grace that it carries with

it. The old aloofness from personal touch remained only in a bracing simplicity and manly detachment from personalities, from sentiment in the use of influence, which was one of the strongest elements in the power.

The remainder of Lyttelton's life fell into three parts, the first as long as the two others together.

During the first of these he was Master of Selwyn College, which was opened under him in 1882. When the offer of this post came to him in his Reading curacy, three years before the College was ready, I saw my opportunity, and grasped an advantage under cover of giving one. I proposed to him that he should gain an insight into the working of College administration by accepting a tutorship at Keble, a College which may be called the elder sister of his own. He did so, and for three years wore (by incorporation) the red hood of an Oxford M.A. It was now that he found in Mary Kathleen, daughter of Mr. George Clive, of Perrystone, the wife who was so true a comrade to him in every feeling, interest, and duty. At Keble he was in the Common Room the most welcome and stimulating of colleagues, and in intercourse with such men as its present Warden, Aubrey Moore, J. R. Illingworth, Wilfrid Richmond, and E. B. Poulton, he learnt and taught, gave and took freely. Outside our walls he entered into a close friendship with Holland, then Tutor of Christ Church, and his colleague, Paget, the present Bishop of Oxford. Thus it was that he became so much one of ourselves, and, as a Cambridge witness shall acknowledge a few lines lower down, that

he acquired so much of the Oxford habit of mind, though he was always loyal, in earnest and in chaff, to the distinctive Cambridge excellence, as he conceived, of exactness and sobriety of thought. Thus also it was, to anticipate a little, that, when the group of friends who had learnt and enjoyed so much in mutual intercourse determined upon a common effort (in *Lux Mundi*) to commend the Church's faith to their own generation, Arthur Lyttelton, though by this time at Cambridge, was included as a matter of course. He chose the subject of the Atonement; and I may be allowed to tell again an incident which happened when the book was in preparation.

The authors submitted their essays to each other's revision; and when Lyttelton read the draft of his paper on the Atonement, it was met by drastic criticism on the part of some of his comrades. A long conversation, in which he did his best for the position which he had taken, brought him to recognize defect and disproportion in it. Then he quietly consented to take it back and revise it, and, having done so, submitted to the annoyance and labour of rewriting the whole. It seemed to some of us no small victory of self-command and true modesty; and it was a very true pleasure to see it have its visible reward when the book came out and more than one thoughtful witness declared that Arthur Lyttelton's essay was the one that helped him most.

But I venture to hope that this was one of the happiest times in his life, and to believe that even Cambridge life, as distinct from his College interests,

was never quite to him what his Oxford life had been.

His relation to undergraduates was perhaps not so easy to him as his dealings with colleagues, and it was perhaps characteristic that his full powers in this respect did not emerge till at Selwyn he had his own direct responsibility.

To Selwyn he migrated in 1881, and began life with Mrs. Lyttelton in temporary rooms in the half-finished buildings, to which temporary and barn-like appendages were added to serve for Chapel and Hall.

Of his life in early days as Master I am able to give the following account from the generous and loyal colleague to whose co-operation he and his College alike owed so much. The Rev. T. H. Orpen writes :

"I knew Arthur Lyttelton but slightly in our undergraduate days. We were in the same year, and I met him occasionally in the rooms of Trinity friends; but I saw enough of him to form a high estimate of his character, and to feel that the Council of Selwyn College had made a wise choice in selecting him, seven years after he went down, as the first Master of the new College. It was not an easy post that he had to fill. There had been a good deal of opposition in the University to the principles on which the College was founded. Some objected that it was an attempt to go behind the Tests Act, others that it was equivalent to 'unchurching' the older colleges. These controversies have now happily become extinct, and Selwyn has taken its place as

a recognized institution in the University; but then it stood on its trial, and it needed a strong and a wise man to make the experiment a success.

"I well remember the scene at the laying the foundation-stone in the summer of 1881, when he first, so to speak, came before the public in his new capacity. There was a large and influential gathering, and many who have since entered into their rest spoke to give the new foundation a word of welcome. Among others Bishop Harvey Goodwin of Carlisle, in a characteristic speech, humorously noticed the extreme youthfulness of the Master. It seemed difficult to reconcile this juvenility with our traditional conceptions of the venerable Head of a House. But when he rose, with his tall youthful figure and earnest, grave face, and in clear and forcible tones stated what would be his aims, and then modestly and reverently asked for the prayers of his hearers that his inexperience might be guided by the Divine Spirit, we all felt that his influence would be at least one element tending to ensure the success of the College. Speaking of the early days, 1882—1885, the Master wrote in an article published in the College Calendar some years after he had left: 'The two strong characteristics which marked the College at the outset were its *esprit de corps* and the steady determination to be as other colleges. I do not mean that the distinctive peculiarities of Selwyn were ignored or repudiated. The religious aspect of the College, the common life, the economical restrictions, were loyally acquiesced in and supported; but along with

these there went the determination not to be a new and alien institution, but to put the College on the same footing as the older colleges, and to share in the full life of the University.' I have quoted these words because they seem to express exactly the spirit which it was the writer's aim to foster.

"Of his own intellectual equipment it may be said that both his natural bent of mind and the course of his studies tended to produce a scholarship rather of the Oxford than the Cambridge type—that is to say, it was characterized rather by broad and general culture than by deep or specialized research. His philosophic temperament found scope in the Moral Science Tripos, in which he was placed at the head of the list in 1873. Afterwards his chief studies were in Theology, mainly on the doctrinal and philosophical side, and he examined both for the Moral Science and Theological Triposes. At Selwyn, especially at first, when the staff was necessarily limited, he took a large personal share in the tutorial and teaching work of the College, lecturing chiefly on the Greek Testament and on English and Church History. He never shrank from hard work, and he did it thoroughly and conscientiously.

"The constitution of Selwyn College as defined by charter gives the most complete control over the internal administration of the College to the Master. In all important cases he would take the collective advice of his colleagues; but he always made it clear that he assumed the responsibility for the ultimate decision himself, and he did this with such admirable

tact as never to produce the least friction. He held, so to speak, the threads of all the departments in his own hand, but he never unduly emphasized this fact by unnecessary or fussy interference.

"In the tone of his Churchmanship he would, I suppose, be popularly classed as a 'Moderate High Churchman.' But if by this term is meant one who forms his opinions by striking a mean between what are generally recognized as extreme views, I am sure he would have been the first to repudiate the title. It was clear, I think, to all who knew him that his opinions were based on definite principles and sincere conviction; but he had distinctly a well-tempered mind that saw things in their due proportion, and men of all types, whether on the staff or among the undergraduates, found in him a sympathetic appreciation of their several standpoints. Though he could not claim any special knowledge of ecclesiastical ritual, he had a high ideal of the dignity of common worship, and even in the somewhat meagre appointments of our temporary Chapel this ideal was carried out with such fulness as circumstances permitted. His last act as Master of the College was to assist at the laying of the foundation-stone of the permanent Chapel, in collecting the funds for which he had taken a keen interest for some time back, though begging was singularly distasteful to him, and I think it was a matter of regret to him that he could only hand over an uncompleted building to his successor.

"He always took a large share of the preaching in Chapel, especially after he had passed on most of

the lecturing duty to his colleagues. His sermons were always carefully thought out, while written evidently with a fluent pen, and never failed to make a vivid and lasting impression on his hearers. I remember in particular two in which he handled topics of current controversy—one on a future state of punishment, and another on the position of the Roman Church in England. In both these sermons there were the same characteristics which may be noticed in his article on the Atonement in *Lux Mundi*—a clear and forcible presentation of the orthodox view, but in fresh and unconventional language. He never tolerated the use of accepted phrases which by unthinking adoption have become emptied of meaning.

"There was a subtle and refined charm in his personality which could not fail to attract. He always made a rule of dining three times a week in Hall, and at the High Table and in the Combination Room his conversation was delightful. On these occasions he never talked 'shop,' but could discourse well on most subjects of general interest, and had a fine taste in both music and art, though not himself a practical musician or artist. He neither drank wine nor smoked —not, I think, from any principles of asceticism, but from the natural simplicity of his tastes. He used to say he agreed with Pindar, *ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ*.

"In fine, the impression he produced on those who knew him well was that of dignity without conceit, friendliness without effusion, and earnest, sincere piety without cant."

To this picture of him as Master is to be added the influence which he had over his men. Only by degrees did it emerge how great and deep this was. For it was not of an aggressive nor of a strongly emotional kind. It was that of the man whom his fellow-undergraduates had looked upon as "reserved and dignified." It was rooted in the profound respect which the undergraduates under him learnt for his vigorous manhood, his strong and patient conscientiousness, his talent and accomplishments borne with simplicity and selflessness, his robust and unaffected religious sincerity, and it became enthusiastic as the men realized that they had collectively and individually his unfailing interest and sympathy, as they found that one who never "managed" them or forced himself on them was ready for them with the wise and discriminating counsel of a real friend.

The following testimony from one of his men says much: "He had a wonderful influence in the College; even the most harum-scarum used to say 'he understands us.' I should think he used to pray a good deal for the men." And it is perhaps more encouraging for others to know that this influence was not that of one of those personalities which take the world by storm. The truest beauty of his character was in its quiet firmness, its steady balance and wholeness, its development and expansion in response to each successive call of work and responsibility.

Beyond the walls of Selwyn the Master entered freely into the administration and life of the University, meeting amongst others in this way Professor Creighton,

whose Chaplain as Bishop of Peterborough and London he afterwards became. On syndicates and in such-like work his strong practical good sense, knowledge of men, and varied interest made him a very valuable colleague.

One of the things in which he bore a part was the movement for Church Reform which sprang, under Dr. Hort's guidance, out of the Disestablishment movements of 1885. His name is among those of the small committee who issued the important Cambridge Declaration given in Dr. Hort's Life (ii. 260). The cause was one which appealed strongly to his intellectual sympathies; and he followed with steady interest its later developments. At Eccles a little later he helped to form the Manchester Diocesan Committee; and he was decided in advocating the rights of the laity, both men and women, to a place in a more adequate representation of the Church. It was remarked of him that his great personal gifts and the confidence felt in him "worked wonders" in disarming the suspicions which are always aroused by new movements. "It does not seem to me," says the same writer, "that the Church has quite known how great a gift God gave her in the Bishop."

Another enterprise of a local sort at Cambridge was one for putting before undergraduates some carefully expressed thought on the deepest matters of faith and enquiry. Lyttelton took as his subjects Dogmatic Religion and the Atonement.

To this time also belongs, as a result of his appointment to the Hulsean Lectureship, the execution

of his thoughtful and independent little book on Miracles. A volume of *College and University Sermons* (Macmillan), published by himself in 1894, gathers up his thoughtful and careful work, and shows him trying to deal in a candid and masculine way with aspects of religion, both doctrinal and practical, which demand and tax the full power of conscientious Christian thought. It is greatly to be hoped that some who have learned what their author proved to be will now turn back to these contributions of his to our faith and thinking.

Meanwhile, he exercised on many whom perhaps he hardly knew an influence all his own—the influence of what he was, of a clerical character, strong and devout, consistent and open-minded. One man, now a fellow of a college, wrote at his death to own that watching the life of the Master of Selwyn had been the determining cause which led him to be ordained. Another owed to a single sermon of his in the University pulpit his vocation to a missionary life. Another, only a visitor to Cambridge, taken in now and again to his house by a friend, remembers "the peculiarly calming and reassuring effect . . . the sense of calm anchorage," which these passing opportunities of intercourse had upon her.

The life of the Lodge at Selwyn was indeed at this time a very ideal one, with its deep domestic happiness and the growing lives of his three children, a special pleasure to one who had a strong love of childhood and interest in its development; with its

collegiate character and the easy hospitality and secure relationships with colleagues and undergraduates; with its position as one of the brightest and most cultivated centres of Cambridge life; and with the coming and going of clergy from outside who came up to preach, and of London friends who linked it with larger interest, social and ecclesiastical.

But as the years passed the Master's own heart turned increasingly to other and, as it might have seemed, less inviting work; and when in 1893 he accepted from the Lord Chancellor (Herschel) the charge of the parish of Eccles, a large new suburb-municipality of Manchester, with heavy duty and few amenities, he followed a strong inward bent. For there was a sort of paradox about him. With his rare social gifts, he did not love society; with his great fitness for academical life, he was not at heart academical; with what seemed to others his strong and easy administrative readiness, he felt oppressively the responsibility of administration.

Accordingly his Selwyn and Cambridge and Oxford friends must not mind if I say the truth—that, in spite of his deep care of his College and the varied interests of University life, he was more entirely at home, his foot upon his own true ground, in those five years of work at Eccles, in the fogs and smoke, among a population consisting largely of the middle or working classes, and in what might have seemed much less congenial surroundings for a man of his trained literary tastes than were the two Universities.

It was in the main the result of a real pastoral instinct and calling, leading to the most directly pastoral work. And certainly as regards himself and his parish there was much to show that he followed a true impulse, or, it may be reverently said, a true call.

The way in which he did his Eccles work could not be more succinctly, honestly, and touchingly told than in the following account written by Mr. George Barber, who filled the post of Warden under him:

"I am asked to give my impressions of Bishop Lyttelton as Vicar of Eccles.

"This was his first as it was his only parochial charge; and he started under the disadvantage of having new curates, new wardens, and a new parish clerk. He, however, soon got the parish into order. He was wont to deprecate his own business capacity; but he certainly had in a marked degree many of the qualities most valued in business men. He was methodical and punctual, and was one of the best chairmen I have known. He kept a meeting to the point without being arbitrary, and he got through the business rapidly without any one feeling hurried. He did not waste his time with small matters of detail, which could be efficiently done by subordinates. He found the man for a given duty, started the work on what he considered the necessary lines, and then left the details to be worked out by his helper, lay or clerical, being himself always ready to back them up.

"He early put into practice some of the views

on Church Reform which he had been long advocating at Cambridge. The Easter Vestry, which had been held in a small vestry at an hour when only a handful of people could attend, was transferred to the large school-room and held on an evening, when there was at once a large and interested gathering. He established a Church Council for dealing with financial matters, the members of which were half elected directly by the congregation and the rest partly official, partly nominated.

"After having liquidated a parochial debt of £1,500, he undertook, through the medium of this Council, large additions to the Schools and the erection of a Parish Room at a cost of £4,000.

"His energies in Eccles were by no means confined to his parish work. He threw himself whole-heartedly into the common life of the place, civic and social. Eccles had been incorporated only a few months before his coming, and his strong insistence from the pulpit and elsewhere on the duties as well as the rights of citizenship were invaluable at such a time. In conjunction with the Congregational minister he founded a Local Charity Organization Society, which happily brought together, in a common work of benevolence, people of widely divergent opinions.

"He deliberately devoted a portion of his time to the work of the Diocese and of the Church at large. Owing to the interest his parishioners took in all his doings, this tended, I think, to widen their interest and to militate against parochial-mindedness. Whilst he possibly did not pay as many afternoon calls as

some of his congregation would have liked, he was always at the call of the sick and sorrowing. He himself looked upon teaching as the sphere in which he could do most good; and he did indeed unreservedly place his many gifts at the disposal of his parishioners. He lectured on such various subjects as Wagner's Music, Dr. Johnson, the Growth of Religious Art, and the Egyptian Monuments.

"His preaching was not, I suppose, what would be called popular. He repaid rather than compelled attention. He usually preached extempore, which, I imagine, had not been his custom before he came to Eccles; and his endeavour to find just the expression which conveyed neither more nor less than he intended sometimes led to a hesitation of manner which was occasionally a little painful. Those, however, who came to hear, heard. His very carefulness of expression gave his hearers confidence when, as not infrequently, he presented to them unfamiliar aspects of truth. One felt he preached with a profound sense of responsibility; and that when he ventured from the beaten track, it was after the most serious consideration. On the Sunday afternoons in the month before he left, he gave four lectures on 'The Nature and Evidence of Christianity,' which were listened to by large congregations with great interest.

"A notice of his work here would not be complete without mention of a large class he held in a private house for the children of the well-to-do, who, he held, were frequently the most neglected in religious matters.

"I believe, however, that his greatest power for good was neither his wise administration nor his helpful teaching, but his personal character. He distinctly raised the tone of the services in church by his personal attitude of reverence, which so markedly enforced his frequent teaching on the subject. This, coupled with a natural grace and dignity of bearing, made the more solemn parts of the service most impressive. I think it was necessary to know him a little to be strongly influenced. There was a certain reserve about him which perhaps made strangers hesitate to approach him; but those who worked with him, one and all felt the charm of his personality. People of very different temperaments and spheres in life were all alike devoted to him. They felt they had to do with a man who upheld a very high standard of life, but who yet took a keen interest in all manner of things, and was always the same—just, courteous, and impartial. No unkind thing of him has ever been said in my hearing. I am satisfied he made a permanent impression on this parish; and there are not a few who will always keep the memory of the years they were associated with him amongst the most cherished of their possessions."

This account may be supplemented by that of another, whose contact with him was not parochial, but came through the general life of Manchester. It is written by Mr. W. T. Arnold, formerly Assistant Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*:

"I did not live on the same side of Manchester as Canon Lyttelton, when he came to that great

northern city, so unlike to the parts of England with which he had hitherto been familiar. And one wondered, as one paid him a first visit in his Eccles home, how a man of his fine training and fastidious taste would tolerate his suburban surroundings and the reek of the not too distant Manchester Ship Canal. But the strength which lay behind his gentleness rose at once to meet the new conditions, and his intense humanness and universal sympathy enabled him to understand and guide the sturdy northern soul which will not tolerate patronage, but which soon perceives the superiority of real goodness and does not mistake gentleness for weakness. Young men of the great merchant houses, members of that 'aristocracy of commerce' which is so prominent in Manchester, and to which anything dishonourable or mean is as impossible as to the proudest military or landed aristocracy elsewhere, soon came to trust him, to work under him, and to conceive even a passionate affection for him. And the same trust and affection for him extended to the humbler members of his congregation, and to the great Manchester community at large. Nor were the simpler pleasures denied to his strenuous life, and I shall always remember a walk we took together over the Derbyshire moors from Hathersage to Eyam, and how he enjoyed the yellow mountain pansies on the summit, and the almost sacred associations of the little plague-cursed mountain village whose seventeenth-century rector had given everything to his flock. His public utterances were always reproduced in the Manchester press, and read with the

attention which their wise suggestiveness demanded, and he was becoming a real power in the new home to whose higher interests he had devoted himself when he was called away to another and perhaps higher, but not more important, sphere of duty. He left a deep regret behind him, and nowhere was his untimely end more bitterly deplored than in the great industrial city which his strong Liberal sympathies and his general interest in all that was human had enabled him so quickly to understand."

The picture made by these two accounts is, I think, complete. It will be enough if I emphasize the great energy which he threw into all the forms of education and instruction, in Church and out, religious and general, on Sundays and week-days (I remember his telling me that practically in the life of these men you must pack everything into Sundays); and, as may be seen from Mr. Barber's words, how gladly he brought out and adapted the stores of his own well-furnished mind to create and develop an interest in the things of literature and art, and also to exhibit to his people the deep interest and strength of the Christian faith on its intellectual side.

In a similar spirit he "organized periodical meetings of clergy at his house, where," we are told, "he took care always to have a good store of new books—theological and others—lying about to suggest to his brethren fresh lines of thought and study."

How he was thought of in the Diocese is shown by his appointment by the Bishop, within two and five years respectively, as Rural Dean and Honorary

Canon of the Cathedral, and by his brother-clergy, in the second year of his work among them, as their representative Proctor in the Convocation of York.

Perhaps this may be the place to mention what ran for nearly twenty years through his life—his weekly contribution to the *Guardian* newspaper. This harnessing to regular work of his early literary skill had a great effect in giving to his Churchmanship its well-informed and practical character. He did the work with extraordinary ease, sometimes writing or dictating an article in the waiting-room of a railway station.

His holidays, which he enjoyed with genuine relish, were sometimes spent abroad, sometimes in a beautiful place on the coast of Mayo belonging to his wife's mother, Mrs. Clive. On one occasion he spent three months in Egypt, a time which proved to be of the greatest interest to him, and of real refreshment of mind and body.

In the summer of 1884 he was invited to be one of the party, composed of Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone and Lord Tennyson, who, with Sir Andrew Clark and others, were taken by Sir Donald Currie in one of the great ships of the South African Line, the *Pembroke Castle*, for a cruise round the north of Scotland, to the Norwegian coast, and to Copenhagen, where the two great Englishmen were visited and entertained by the King and Royal Family. It was on this occasion that one of his companions, enthusiastic, no doubt, but singularly discerning, described Arthur as "beautiful within and without."

It was in the nature of the case that a man of such high qualifications should be called on to what we know as higher work; and Lyttelton was so far ready to accept a change, that Manchester, with all its charms, had the drawback of a climate whose moist finger had begun to touch his constitution with rheumatic affections.

The last move (as it proved) of his life brought him to work of a dual kind. He undertook in 1898 the charge as Provost of St. Nicholas' College, Lancing, of the southern division of the "Woodward" Schools, and as Suffragan Bishop of the Winchester Diocese under the present Archbishop of Canterbury a large share of the work of its supervision. To this was added a little later the position of Archdeacon of Winchester, and the consequent tenure of a place in the Convocation of Canterbury.

He found his local base of operations for this varied work in the little quiet Hampshire market town of Petersfield, in a charming house, once the old-fashioned hostelry of "the Castle" on the Portsmouth road, in which mansion Charles II., it is said, "lay" on one of his journeys. It is a happiness to remember that for the last years of his life he had a home which for him and his was so ideal. But the mixed duties which he now took up with whole-hearted energy left him comparatively little time for home.

The Schools of which he was Provost were passing through a time of transition and difficulty. He felt the strain of this a good deal. But those who were connected with him in the management had a grateful

sense of the quiet patience and sagacity and unflagging care which he brought to their counsels. He made them feel (as one of them witnesses) that he grasped the ideal of these Schools as an instrument through which the Church brought the power of her Faith and her traditions to the task of bringing up the coming generations of Englishmen to be pure-hearted and God-fearing citizens.

The Provost is not in the position of a Master: his direct contact with the life of the Schools can only be slight; his charge is the more wearisome work of administrative superintendence and adjustment. But he made his mark, and, as elsewhere, largely by what he was—by his high integrity and disinterestedness of bearing and aim.

It was at Lancing that the first sign of his last illness showed itself in a fainting fit, after an exceptional strain of work in a long and difficult College meeting, and it may be right to quote the beautiful words of Mr. Tower, the Head Master:

"It could not be without significance for us at Lancing that the first evidence that his labour on earth was done was brought home to him and to us as he sank fainting in Lancing Chapel while celebrating the Holy Eucharist on Sunday morning, September 28th, 1902. Before that altar he had offered himself, soul and body, for the work of the Church in connexion with these Schools, when he accepted the office of Provost; and before that same altar he rendered up his charge to the God he had so faithfully served."

Of his work as Suffragan Bishop I am happy in being able to quote the words of the chief and brother under whom he worked. I remember the time when Bishop Davidson first told me of his disposition to offer Lyttelton the office, and asked me what I thought of the plan. I told him with great confidence that I believed they would be able, without entire agreement, to work together in very happy mutual trustfulness and accord. But the result surpassed my hopes. Without speaking too much of the living, I cannot describe particularly the character and causes of the complete accord between the two men. But it is difficult for us, in our short-sighted human way, not to regret that, when the one was called to the tremendous responsibilities of the Primacy, he was not to have among his leading colleagues in the Episcopate one in whom he had such trust, and who would have lent him such help of judgment and experience, as the Bishop whom he had come to know and love in the intimate colleagueship of his Winchester days.

But the Archbishop will speak for himself: "I am grateful for the opportunity of saying just a word as to the help and benediction which came to the whole Diocese of Winchester when, in the autumn of 1898, Arthur Lyttelton accepted, almost to my surprise, the invitation I gave him to become Bishop Suffragan of Southampton. The Diocese had been well served by his predecessors; but he brought a new kind of strength, and has left behind him a different kind of impress. From the first those who came in

contact with his vivid personality felt encouraged to be at their best. His intellectual force, his wide range of reading, his keen literary taste, and his power of applying those gifts and attainments in the ordinary round of ecclesiastical work to the solution of perplexities and the strengthening of the weak-kneed, gave to his episcopal ministry a kind of glamour of an inspiriting sort. It was not so much, or rather it was not at all, that he was in the ordinary sense brilliant as a speaker or preacher, but people could not listen to him, either in public, or still more in the intercourse of private life, without finding themselves encouraged, though scarce knowing why, to think largely and generously upon the subjects of present-day controversy, and to place things in their due proportion. I say this, not from my personal experience alone, though it is exactly what I did daily experience, but from the testimony which used to reach me from unexpected quarters, clerical and lay, as to the manner in which his presence had been a stimulus both to old and young. We had on almost every occasion the help of his presence in the Ember Days, when the candidates for Ordination were gathered at Farnham, and I am certain that enquiry among the men who thus came under his influence would show how fruitful had been his incidental help in the ordinary conversation at such times. For it was, I think, in conversation, or in utterances lying in the borderland of literature and theology, that his influence 'told' most. The part he took in promoting 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding' among the clergy was noteworthy, and

I think the effectiveness of what he did in that respect was due to the evidence his own life and conversation gave to the power of thoughtfulness both in religious and political fields. He was one of those in whom personal devoutness seems to be inherent and not acquired : it is difficult to imagine him without it. Something no doubt was due to the charm and beauty of his physical presence, but no one could say that this was more than an adjunct or an expression of the qualities that lay behind. There was nothing emotional, and at first some of those whom he tried to help—the Community of Deaconesses at Portsmouth, for example, to whom he acted as Warden and teacher——used to miss the warmth and glow which some other teachers possess ; but I think I am right in saying that before long every one learnt to care so intensely for what he had to say, and for the assistance he gave them in thinking for themselves, that they preferred him to almost any other teacher.

" There is a singular appropriateness in the generous gift which he left the Diocese of Winchester—a little library of well-chosen books, religious, social, historical, and political—for the free use of the clergy whom he had guided, half unconsciously, into higher paths of study and thoughtfulness than had in many cases been usual before.

" I do not trust myself to say what his loss meant to me personally. While life lasts I shall thank God for those four years of closest friendship and affection, of constant stimulus, and of bright example."

The position of a Suffragan Bishop has often been,

and is, the subject of discussion, and perhaps of depreciatory comment. Its limitations, which deprive its holder of the exercise of some of a Bishop's characteristic functions in ruling and in ordaining, are, not unnaturally, felt to be anomalous and irksome. However this may be, the Bishop of Southampton found in the position from the first a thoroughly congenial sphere. He said of it that it had the chief interests of a Bishop's life without its more oppressive responsibilities, and, it may be added, its technical routine. It was in his nature to shrink from responsibilities till they came. This was part of what he meant by "my usual indolence." What was saved from mere public work could be expended in closer relations with the clergy and their flocks. This was the work to which he now gave himself, and in which he earned a full measure of gratitude and regard. To those who knew him well, there is something specially beautiful in the way in which natural gifts blended with what experience and grace and self-discipline contributed to equip him for work. It was natural to him to bring to it good breeding, good sense, practical wisdom, and social readiness. But it was not natural to mix readily with different sorts of men, to break through personal reserve in order to show sympathy, to make the things of others his own, to speak in tones which reached and won the hearts of grown people and children alike. Yet this was what he had learned to do; and this was what is told about his intercourse in visits to country parsonages, or the great town parishes of Portsmouth and Southampton, about his

confirmations, about his dealings with the Sisterhood of which he became Warden.

Let me give at once a single instance. An incumbent's institution to his new parish may be a very formal or a very moving ceremony. This is the account given by a lady of one of his at which she happened to be present: "I never shall forget what a reality he made that service to all who were present, giving of his very best to the scanty little congregation who had struggled through the rain. His sermon was uplifting and beautiful from its first words to its last; and while it was just as practical as it could be, it was so lofty, and gave to a service that might easily have been purely formal a sense of dignity and greatness, by linking it with the whole of Church life and order. His text was: 'I perceive that this is a holy man of God which passeth by us continually.' He spoke of the ideal life between the pastor and his people; how he should accept all their social good offices, share in their every-day interests, pass in and out among them continually, and yet walk so in their midst that even through all this happy closeness of familiar intercourse all should still feel concerning him: 'This is a holy man of God.'"

Moving about among the clergy, he felt the isolation in which many live, and which narrow means increase. He was anxious to do what he could to help them spiritually by Quiet Days, etc., and intellectually by promoting meetings for study. It was in this connexion that he became greatly impressed with the

need of some means by which, without cost to themselves, clergy who could not visit libraries might have access to thoughtful and interesting books; and when he knew that he must die, he arranged (as the Archbishop has said) that the whole of his theological and economical books should go to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester, to be used, if they would so accept the gift, for issue to the clergy of the Diocese. He expressed the hope that some of his friends might after his death join to make a small fund, which might bear the postage of such issue, and free the clergy of even the smallest charge.

His most intimate spiritual work came to him as Warden of St. Andrew's Home at Portsmouth. Its head, Mother Emma, tells how he discharged it:

"The work the Bishop did as Warden of St. Andrew's Home for Deaconesses was very remarkable. Not only did he by his lectures and teaching raise the standard of knowledge, but he trained us to think. The spiritual help given in retreats was great. His practice was to consider with us the fundamental truths, and their practical bearing on our life of devotion and work. He was wonderfully patient and helpful in his dealing with individuals; at times apparently stern, but none could doubt his real love for our souls. He expected an exact observance of 'rule,' and was anxious to teach us that without careful self-discipline we could not be at liberty to run the way of God's commandments. His words were always helpful and weighty, but his own personality was even a greater influence. His sermon

of 'Christ as a Spiritual Master' shows most clearly his own practice in the Wardenship of our Home."

One small piece of work which he liked much came to him through his chaplaincy to the Hampshire Volunteers. On two occasions he was present in the camp for a day or two, and preached on the Sunday. Both times he thoroughly enjoyed his stay, and regretted his inability to prolong it. If we may judge from a sermon preached after his death by his successor, the liking and respect which he felt for the officers and men were reciprocated by them. Without dwelling further on details of his episcopal work, I believe I am justified in saying that it sent a real impulse of life and energy through the life of the Diocese as a whole.

I am painfully conscious how much such a summary of his short career as I have given fails to reveal his personality, and may omit much of what was most characteristic. He was a beautiful boy, and in manhood his face and bearing had a remarkable charm and power. "His friends will long cherish in memory the uplifted look, the noble face, the rippling of the rich-toned hair about his brow." The thought came to many independently that the face recalled to them something in the traditional likeness of our Blessed Lord. It was a look of frank manhood and simple dignity, without a touch of self-assertion, and gaining, as life went on, increasing gentleness as well as gravity of expression.

The words just now quoted are those of H. S. Holland.

Between him and Arthur Lyttelton there was a cordial and delightful friendship from the latter's Keble days on to the day of his death. Unlike in temperament, they were at one not only in every serious interest of Churchmanship, politics, and social work, but in the lighter things, personal and literary, which give brightness and variety to intercourse.

Perhaps the last extract may be continued: "And they will recall a nature singularly guileless and transparent, undimmed by any touch of worldliness, incapable of anything petty, a little aloof and alone, with a certain dignity of character that came from its obvious moral simplicity. His special gift lay in his critical insight into literature; his judgment, in poetry especially, was almost faultless. He knew the best of English work, and could speak it with clear mastery. And into music he brought the same unerring touch. He did not enter easily into intimacy; but he was delightfully companionable. He had no smallnesses whatever. His sympathies were broad and humane. He was true to the great traditions of his uncle, W. E. Gladstone, and his father. He believed in wholesome Liberalism, and in high social causes, and in peace, and in the enfranchisement of women. He served his Church with the unhesitating loyalty which belonged to the stock and tradition from which he sprang."

The last lines touch, of course, on matters of difference. But those who did not agree with him in all these matters will recognize that his championship of opinions and causes was of the noble sort, which

always inspires by its character and spirit, even though it be not always in opinion right.

There is no doubt which way his judgment would have inclined in the present fiscal controversy: As a political economist and student of social questions, he was a convinced Free Trader. He said with prescience a few years ago, that the great development of a certain type of Imperialism would almost certainly lead on to proposals for a revival of Protection, and a few months before his death spoke of the likelihood that the Free Trade battle would have to be fought over again.

But this is going perhaps too far on the dusty field of controversy.

The Christian Social Union, with its effort to carry Christian principles into matters of social, commercial, and industrial concern; the cause of peace, not "at any price," but in preference to much that was interested or boastful or aggressive; the White Cross League and other efforts to awake men to a nobler sense of what their own manhood and their chivalry to women alike require; the temperance movement, with its crusade against the terrible obsession of our national life, our streets, and our homes by alcoholic excess, which he supported by personal example as well as in other ways; the movement for the extension of the franchise to women, in which he strongly believed,—these and suchlike were causes to which Lyttelton gave, by personal help and by his writing, influence which counted for a good deal.

"How much I feel," writes Mrs. Fawcett, "the cause of goodness and uprightness and purity has gained from his beautiful character and constant courage in standing by what was right, even if he had to stand almost alone!"

Mrs. Schwann, wife of the Member for North Manchester, in enclosing a resolution by which the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades Union Council record their sense of the loss to the Community in the death of one "whose sympathies and labour were ever at the service of the people," tells how, when a draft of the work to be undertaken by such a council was first laid before a mixed audience, "Mr. Lyttelton's quiet voice was heard first: 'I approve of that scheme—I shall support it.' Others followed; but he did not wait to hear what they thought, and his sympathy was a great support, moving more doubting friends to lend their approval and countenance."

I may end with a few words of my own on his religious convictions.

They were equally removed from being merely emotional and from "hard" intellectuality. The clear insight of a strong and undimmed conscience wrought the warp of them, and the woof was marked by a sober and reverent judgment. They were broad-based on a great rational trust in God and acceptance of His word in Christ, quickened and sealed by more than one experience of vivid intuition, but in its staple and substance the mature conviction of his whole educated self, understanding, conscience, and will. He accepted with firm adherence the

Church's faith and teaching, and in the interpretation of it and the treatment of critical detail he used to the full the knowledge and thought of his own time. Perhaps the best boon and the greatest encouragement which he leaves to the Church is the example that such an attitude, the attitude of her truest sons in every age, is still possible in ours, when the forces of criticism, and still more the Babel of religious voices and of self-assertive tendencies pushed into extravagance in various forms, might seem to make this large filial docility impossible. Nor should it be omitted to note how the quiet order of the Church of England, her daily offices, her sacramental gifts, her round of fast and feast, interpreted with faithful but untechnical loyalty, supplied him to his own consciousness with just the discipline, controlling and strengthening his inward life, of which he felt the need, as well "as the sober standard of feeling in matters of practical religion," which, in Keble's words, go with such discipline.

How this strong faith and this quiet discipline stood him in stead in the last great trial of humanity, after a medical verdict of inevitable death was delivered to him without preparation, is not in its detail matter for public telling. Yet it would be wrong to withhold altogether from others the strong and faithful witness of his death-bed. For nine weeks it was given to him to draw with open eyes and unclouded faculties onward to the end. For that long discipline he composed himself at once in the quiet and practical simplicity of Christian penitence and faith; and then with unfaltering patience he waited.

The intense seriousness and inner concentration, the grave simplicity and entire laying aside of self, the quickened and discriminating sympathy for each of those from whom one by one he had to part—these things went along with an unchanged and keen interest in the news of the day, the daily paper, the bit of literature, the new book. So it was that one who saw him said that of the many whom he had seen in like case none had ever seemed to belong at once so completely to both worlds.

He felt himself that some of the quiet strength granted to him came of the long and at first difficult habit of self-discipline in meeting small duties and keeping to rules of purpose. It was characteristic of him that every day of his illness, if possible at a fixed hour, the Prayer-Book offices of Morning and Evening Prayer were, by his insistent desire, said with him by one or other of his family, to his great content. Across all the interruptions and difficulties of illness this was never allowed to fail.

But the root of all was a faith which was indeed a living lesson on what faith should be. Imagination, in one who knew all that the poets have said or suggested, was consciously and intentionally still. There was no reliance on strong emotions or special experiences. It was a faith in which the whole force of the man, moral and intellectual, quietly matured through his whole experience of life and thought, of effort and prayer, was gathered up into a conviction of the truth of God as known to us through Jesus

Christ, and of that care of His for us into which we can with perfect confidence commend our spirits.

It seemed equally natural to see in it at one moment the simple faith of a man, and at another the maturest and mellow faith of a Churchman. This faith was ready in him when the great emergency came; and under the stress it grew and glowed and showed itself for what it was to the eyes of those around him, and even in a manner to himself. It was the strength of the man himself, gathered and focussed to the full; and yet it was as surely and evidently not of himself, but the full-wrought work of God in him. So it was perfectly tranquil, and yet (if man may rightly speak) perfectly humble. We who saw it were abashed, but also indescribably encouraged and guided by it.

If the least reflection of it finds a way through these words, their boldness will be doubly justified, for in it assuredly Lyttelton's life came to fulness; and through it he delivered, as it is given to very few to do, the witness which it was the desire of his life to give to the reality of the Unseen and of the promises of God, and to their absolute fitness for the perfecting of manhood in wholeness and simplicity. It was more by much than a moral attitude: it was a response, and his own words shall describe its nature:

"We can take nothing with us through death; all knowledge, all learning, imagination, everything fails, except the knowledge of God. It is like the play *Everyman* which I have been reading: 'Sickness undressing

the Soul for death.' Nothing is left but the sense of God. Whatever a man has felt about God all his life, that is what will be with him at the end : nothing else lasts. If we have looked upon God only as a ruler, whose commands have to be more or less unwillingly obeyed, or if we have not thought of Him at all, we shall be *solitary* in death. Only the knowledge of God goes with us."

EDW. ROFFEN.

TENNYSON.[1]

A GREAT man's death is generally described as a national loss. But few probably of those who use the commonplace phrase have ever paused to consider his life as a national benefit. Yet it is obvious that the one is no less certain than the other; his death is no loss if his life has been no benefit to the nation. Still, among the component elements of the public prosperity, it is not usual to reckon the lives and the work of our great contemporaries. Statesmen, indeed, and soldiers—men who have directly and visibly aided in building up or defending the empire—may perhaps be remembered when we are taking stock of our capital; their achievements can be expressed in terms of material welfare. But who thinks of a poet's life as a portion of the public wealth? The world goes on much the same as before, though his voice is silenced. The processes, almost mechanical as they have come to seem, of government and of commerce—indeed, even of education and ministry—are apparently undisturbed by his death, and therefore we infer that they were uninfluenced by his life. It is rarely that men recognize the vast part that character plays in these matters of daily national existence; and it is still more rarely that they realize the share which great poetry has in

[1] Written in 1893,

forming and strengthening character. But surely it is no exaggeration to call such a life and work as that of Tennyson a priceless national benefit. It is, to begin with, a great thing that, amid the absorbing industrial interests of the age, men's minds have been recalled to the beauty of the world, and especially of the common scenes of their own country. What Wordsworth and Scott did for the wilder parts of Britain, what Byron did for Southern Europe, Tennyson has done for the plain pastoral landscapes of England. He has not only taught men to look for their beauties, but he has invested them with a beauty which they did not before possess by the transmuting force of his poet's imagination. Our native land is more to us than it was, because of his intense love, his minute observation, of it, and thus we have gained a real enrichment of the national life, a real addition to the happiness of Englishmen.

It is a great thing, again, that men should have been taught a rational and dignified patriotism by the most commanding voice of our age. It is probably not true to say that we are tending to become cosmopolitan, in the sense that national limitations are being lost in international sympathy ; for

> . . . the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world,[1]

is still a vision of the poet's most visionary character ; but no one can be blind to the danger of a relaxed and lukewarm patriotism, generated by the ease of locomotion and intercourse. We do not love other peoples better, but we tend to love our own people less. In face of this danger Tennyson's influence

[1] *The Works of Alfred Tennyson.* Macmillan, 1897, p. 101.

has been a great national gain. We are not thinking of the direct and even crude appeals to patriotic feeling which he was fond of making in his later years, to *Hands all round*, or *Riflemen, form*, or even to *The Revenge*, *Lucknow*, or the other noble ballads in which he commemorated English valour. We are thinking, rather, of the stately stanzas in which he has embodied the essence of English political history and the secret of English political strength. Lines such as the well-known description of England—

> A land of settled government,
> A land of old and just renown,
> Where freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent—[1]

are a political education in themselves, and form a fitting foundation for a rational patriotism. We cannot doubt that by making such conceptions permanent and popular, as only a poet could make them, Tennyson's influence has been a priceless national possession.

It is almost unnecessary to go further, and appeal to the poet's work in higher regions of life and thought; for it must be familiar to all who are alive to moral influences. That in an age of great ethical uncertainty the acknowledged leader of English literature should have consistently upheld a lofty ideal of purity is a gain to the national life which can hardly yet be estimated. It is not easy to combine a poet's temperament, sensitive, as many of Tennyson's greatest poems show, to all human passions and emotions, with the self-control and just insight into moral forces which in Tennyson, as in Wordsworth, made him a great

[1] *Works*, p. 64.

teacher of purity. The moral influence of two such poets, an influence which has been felt for almost the whole century, is an actual benefit, to the full value of which we are for the most part ungratefully blind. Nor, again, need we do more than mention the spiritual side of his teaching. In a sceptical and material age he, keenly alive both to its doubts and to its scientific achievements, has yet persistently forced men to dwell on what is spiritual. Much that is evil may be said of this age, as indeed of every age, and the future may seem dark to many of us. But at all events we have come thus far without a moral catastrophe, and without the wreck of faith; and high among the forces which have thus guided the nation must be reckoned the poetry of Tennyson.

It is natural to speculate how such a poet, so devoted to his art, so secluded, so lofty, came to be popular in our prosaic age, how, indeed, he came to exist at all. We can trace some of the influences which helped to produce him. There was the influence of his great predecessors in poetry, of whom only Wordsworth was living during the critical third decade of Tennyson's life. But Wordsworth never really touched Tennyson, and the older poet knew this. In spite of Tennyson's expression of gratitude to his writings, he says:

"I am persuaded that he is not much in sympathy with what I should myself most value in my attempts, viz. the spirituality with which I have endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which I have wished to exhibit its most ordinary appearances."[1]

[1] *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, ii. 416, quoted in *Tennysoniana*, p. 95.

He was right; Tennyson bears but few traces of Wordsworth's impassioned austerity. Byron had been the idol of his boyhood, but Byron was no longer a living influence to the young men of 1830. Shelley, as we know from Lord Houghton's amusing account of the Cambridge deputation to Oxford, had dethroned him among Tennyson's set, and Shelley's impress is visible enough in the *Poems, chiefly Lyrical.* But Keats, not Shelley, was the real forerunner of Tennyson. The sensuous richness of his verse, his luxuriant fancy, his occasional affectation of phrase, and his subtle power of calling up associations of beauty, are all reproduced in Tennyson, even in his earliest poems. Keats also anticipated Tennyson in the reverent care and criticism which he bestowed on his art. The poet who, for critical reasons, left *Hyperion* a fragment was the artistic ancestor of the poet who re-wrote *The Princess.*

Again, we see in Tennyson the influence of the generous political aspirations of 1832. The enthusiasm of the Reform Bill and the rush of the long pent-up stream of Liberal changes swept with them most of the ardent youths of that time, and *Locksley Hall*, though not published till 1842, reflects the hopes of ten years earlier. It also, indeed, marks the moment when the former aspirations began to give way to the disappointment of experience.

. . . The Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be,

is described, by the youth who saw it, as passed.

So I triumphed ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint:
Science moves, but slowly slowly, creeping on from point to point:
Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

That last couplet might stand as the motto for the decade in which political ardour died out, the decade of the Irish famine and the Chartist movement. But it must not make us forget the influence of the earlier period, as we may read it in the splendid stanzas on "Freedom," or in Tennyson's lasting faith in human progress.

It is not so easy to trace the religious influences which affected him. Cambridge in 1829 was under no very powerful religious spell, and the poems which date from that period are very little concerned with religion. We find, indeed, in the *Supposed Confessions of a Second-rate Sensitive Mind*, the curiously named poem which was suppressed after 1830, and has only recently reappeared in the collected edition, evident marks of the discussions which are described in *In Memoriam*, and are alluded to with pungent force in *A Character*. Clearly, if we may trust the *Supposed Confessions*, the foundations of faith were investigated at Cambridge sixty years ago no less freely and fearlessly than they are now. Indeed, from all that we know of Arthur Hallam, it must have been impossible for those in his intimacy to avoid being drawn into the religious speculations which absorbed him until—

Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.[1]

[1] *Works*, p. 274.

The writer of the *Theodicæa Novissima* must have taken his friend with him into the deepest religious problems. But, from the evidence of the poems, it seems clear that the strong religious element in Tennyson's thought was due rather to the questionings aroused by Hallam's death than to a sympathetic interest in the topics congenial to him. From *In Memoriam* onwards religion is a prominent subject in Tennyson's poems; before that it was subordinate.

These, then, were some of the influences which shaped and guided Tennyson. We do not mean, of course, that a great poet can be thus accounted for, or that he is only the product of a few given factors. Whatever the influences, he himself was more than they. Thus, though the group of men among whom Tennyson lived at Cambridge contained many striking and some great personalities, and though he himself loyally affirmed the supremacy of Arthur Hallam, it is scarcely doubtful that Tennyson's was a larger nature, a more potent influence, than any. This is, indeed, no mere conjecture. When the late Dr. Thompson, Master of Trinity, not the least eminent of the band, was asked a few years ago which of all their number they themselves at the time looked up to as their greatest, he said that none would have hesitated for a moment to place Tennyson at the head of them all. Clearly, then, he brought to Cambridge, as he brought into the world, more than he gained from it. The various influences we have spoken of gave form and bent to his genius: they did not create it.

Nevertheless, genius itself is not independent of art,

and Tennyson's work is one of the most striking examples in all literature of this truth. He has left behind him a very considerable amount of poetry, and though others have written more, what is remarkable in Tennyson is the faultlessness of so great a range of writing. It was comparatively easy for a fashionable minor poet like Rogers to polish his scanty couplets till they satisfied his critical sense; and the fastidious reserve of a really great poet, such as Gray, limited and barred his creative power. But in Tennyson's case faultlessness and fertility went together. Is there any other English poet, is there, indeed, any poet, who in so great an extent of verse has left so few faulty or feeble lines? We doubt it; Tennyson's perfection of form is, considering the amount of his work, unparalleled in literature. Here and there he fails to retain the true poetical note, and his language sinks into bathos, or its studied plainness does not always avoid baldness. Thus, in *Forlorn*, one stanza seems to jar, with its commonplace ejaculation, upon the weird horror of the rest:

> Dreadful! has it come to this,
> O unhappy creature?
> You that would not tread on a worm
> For your gentle nature . . .
> In the night, O the night,
> O the night of weeping!

Another example occurs in an earlier poem, *The Captain*:

> Dismal error! fearful slaughter!
> Years have wander'd by,
> Side by side beneath the water
> Crew and Captain lie;

There the sunlit ocean tosses
O'er them mouldering,
And the lonely seabird crosses
With one waft of the wing.

Here the beautiful end is marred by the awkward and commonplace line which begins our quotation. But though Tennyson may sometimes, however rarely, lapse into baldness or bathos, he is never unmeaning or verbose: he is scarcely ever weak. For more than sixty years his poetical activity was ceaseless, and yet in all that he produced one never feels that at any point he has relaxed that concentration of the whole mind upon his work which is the essential condition of the highest art. Every line is the result of thought; he never trusts to the chances of an easy fluency.

No artist, unless Raphael be an exception, was ever born faultless into the world, and there is evidence that the astonishing evenness of Tennyson's artistic performance was due to extreme care, and to a faculty of self-criticism, which is apparently very rarely found in poets. He has always been ready to revise, and sometimes to remodel, his poems, and the changes give proof of the most minute study. In this he resembles Wordsworth, but the difference is, that whereas Wordsworth's alterations were mostly for the worse, Tennyson's were nearly always for the better. There is a well-known example in *A Dream of Fair Women*. The passage describing Iphigenia's death originally, and indeed so late as the edition of 1848,[1] stood:

One drew a sharp knife thro' my tender throat
Slowly,—and nothing more.

The unpleasant suggestiveness of this description did

[1] *Poems*. By Alfred Tennyson. Fifth edition, 1848, p. 154.

not escape the vigilance of the poet-critic, and it was ultimately changed to :

> The bright death quiver'd at the victim's throat;
> Touch'd; and I knew no more.

But the best opportunities for studying Tennyson's art, as shown by his revision of his own work, are afforded by *The Princess*, *In Memoriam*, and the growth of *Maud* from its germ in the lovely stanzas published in a volume[1] of miscellaneous poems no less than eighteen years before the completed work appeared. We will not say that, in every case, the later is the better form, but we venture to assert that hardly one of the numerous changes in *In Memoriam* is anything but an improvement. For instance, in the splendid section[2] beginning—

> Love is and was my Lord and King—

compare the original with the present form of the last stanza. This is the reading of the first edition :

> And hear at times a sentinel
> That moves about from place to place,
> And whispers to the vast of space
> Among the worlds, that all is well.

They are noble lines, but what a subtle sense of harmony is shown by their alteration into the present form :

> And hear at times a sentinel
> Who moves about from place to place,
> And whispers to the worlds of space,
> In the deep night, that all is well.

[1] *The Tribute: a Collection of Miscellaneous Unpublished Poems by Various Authors*, 1837, p. 244.

[2] *Works*, p. 283. We are indebted for the readings of the first edition, as for many other references, to the useful little volume *Tennysoniana* (Pickering, 1879).

For here, besides the omission of the strained phrase, "the vast of space," we have the image of the "deep night," which links this to the following section :

> And all is well, tho' faith and form
> Be sunder'd in the night of fear;

and thus preserves the imaginative unity of the whole. But *The Princess* displays most strikingly Tennyson's care and felicity in revising, or rather recasting, his work. Besides the introduction of the incomparable songs, which are absent in the first two editions, he added much, and also made numberless subtle changes in words and phrases, though the lovely lyrical passages were left untouched. And, indeed, what word could be well changed in "Tears, idle tears," or "Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height"? But there can be no question as to the improvement effected in the whole structure and style of this beautiful poem.

We have dwelt thus upon Tennyson's revision of his own work, in order to illustrate the extreme and continuous care with which he studied and developed his art. The result is seen in a retention of poetic power to a degree and over a period unparalleled, unless Goethe be an exception, in all literature. Tennyson at the outset of his career was charged by two exceptionally good judges with ignorance of the principles of metre. The charge, whether made by Coleridge or by Edgar Poe, would be absurd now, so great was the poet's development through jealous self-criticism. But the fact on which we have been dwelling points also to one of the limitations to which the great poet, like all great as well as lesser

men, was subject. It seems to indicate a certain want of spontaneity and flow, which is a marked characteristic of all his work, with the very important exception of his purely lyrical poems. His narrative and didactic verse—speaking generally, his blank verse—does not seem to spring at once, fully formed, from the conception which it embodies, but to be fitted to it by a slow and careful process, which, however excellent the workmanship, rarely results in that perfect harmony of language and thought which is the highest poetry. Tennyson's blank verse, rich and melodious though it is, is seldom spontaneous and simple enough to carry the reader rapidly along, as on a great smooth-flowing river, but we are continually stopping to wonder at the mechanism, the curious phrases, the sudden and felicitous touches of description, the incomparable artfulness of the whole. He made a practice, we are told, of crystallizing some passing impression, some effect of scenery, in a phrase or line, and many of these, stored in his memory, were afterwards fitted into a poem. To this habit we are indebted for many of the most beautiful lines in all poetry. Such a descriptive phrase, to take an unhackneyed instance, as

> The wide-wing'd sunset of the misty marsh,[1]

permanently enriches our sense of the loveliness of the world. But the gain is produced at the cost of ease and rapidity of movement, and even, in many instances, of unity of impression. He sets us thinking how he came by the phrases that study his verses; the mind is called off from the actual object. Thus, in the fine poem *Love and Duty*, the strong ethical interest is not

[1] *The Last Tournament.*

heightened, but rather interrupted and stopped, by the descriptive lines, beautiful in themselves though they are :

> Till now the dark was worn, and overhead
> The lights of sunset and of sunrise mix'd
> In that brief night; the summer night, that paused
> Among her stars to hear us; stars that hung
> Love-charm'd to listen: all the wheels of Time
> Spun round in station, but the end had come.

Every word here bears the true Tennysonian impress, the impress of research, of thought, of scrupulous observation and care, but not the impress of the highest imagination which fuses matter and manner, thought and phrase, into one inevitable and harmonious whole. That is what we miss in Tennyson. He is not, to adopt Wordsworth's well-known criticism of Goethe, inevitable enough. His style is full of felicity, but it is the felicity that surprises, not the felicity that unconsciously draws on and informs the mind till it is wholly penetrated with the sense of the object. An instance occurs to us from the description, in *Aylmer's Field*, of Averill's sermon and the mourning congregation, who had

> Left
> Their own gray tower, or plain-faced tabernacle,
> To hear him; all in mourning these, and those
> *With blots of it about them*, ribbon, glove
> Or kerchief; while the church,—one night, except
> *For greenish glimmerings thro' the lancets*,—made
> Still paler the pale head of him, who tower'd
> Above them, with his hopes in either grave.
> Long o'er his bent brows linger'd Averill,
> *His face magnetic to the hand* from which
> Livid he pluck'd it forth, and labour'd thro'
> His brief prayer-prelude, gave the verse "Behold,
> Your house is left unto you desolate!"

The phrases we have italicised exactly illustrate what we mean. They are, except perhaps the conceit of the face "magnetic to the hand," accurate and happy in their descriptive power, but they are out of place there, and distract the mind from the emotion of the moment, which should be dominant. But we ought not to forget that all such criticisms, when they relate to a great poet, must be very imperfect generalizations, and that he will often rise above the limitations which are yet undoubtedly to be discerned in his work taken as a whole. He will even sometimes gain the highest poetical effects from those limitations themselves. Thus nothing can be more elaborate and studied than the gorgeous description of the tropical island in *Enoch Arden*:

> The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
> And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
> The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
> The lightning flash of insect and of bird,
> The lustre of the long convulvuluses
> That coil'd around the stately stems, and ran
> Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glows
> And glories of the broad belt of the world,
> All these he saw; *but what he fain had seen*
> *He could not see, the kindly human face,*
> *Nor ever hear a kindly voice*, but heard
> The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
> The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
> The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
> And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
> Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,
> As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
> Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
> *A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:*
> No sail from day to day, but every day
> The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts

Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;
The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

Nothing could be more elaborate; but mark how the elaboration is broken by the two italicised passages of plain, almost bald, simplicity, which by sheer force of contrast bring before us the solitary human being, desolate and bleak amidst the gorgeous riches of nature. The elaboration is here a necessary element in the imaginative effect.

Still, taken as a whole, Tennyson's blank verse, indeed his longer poems generally, are wanting in movement and flow, and this is no mere defect of style or literary manner, but springs from a more fundamental characteristic of the poet. The movement and flow in the form of a poem correspond to the living development of its matter, which in its turn is the work of the imagination. It is the imagination which gives to any product of the mind a vital unity, and fuses its various parts into an organic whole. By this power the form becomes the necessary expression of the matter, and the matter lives and grows, and is developed according to its own inner and necessary law. The characters, when the poem deals with characters, are living, and act according to the law of their being; they grow and are influenced by their external conditions, and the whole poem moves from point to point continuously with no loss of unity. By the same power the poet

is absorbed in his creation; we become unconscious of him and his art, and see only the object he would have us see. In the great imaginative poets the style often rises to a height far beyond Tennyson's, but it is never incongruous; it is rich, not with the fruits of fancy or mere observation, but with the splendour of the imagination. The imagery of Lear's ravings or of Richard II.'s musings is no mere poetical ornament; it springs from and expresses the character of the speaker and the circumstances of the moment. Now this peculiar power of the imagination is deficient in Tennyson, and the deficiency accounts both for the too self-conscious art that is visible in his style, and for the want of life and movement in the whole structure of his poems. His greatest, or at least his most ambitious, work is the series of Arthurian idylls, and in these, though the action undoubtedly progresses from the opening to the catastrophe, it does not do so continuously. The poet, as has often been said, gives us a series of pictures, not a single living continuous drama. In one or two of these separate pictures he does, indeed, reach beyond his wonted limitations to an imaginative height which makes them very great poems. *The Passing of Arthur*, *The Last Tournament*, and above all *Guinevere*, are splendid instances of the power which, in general, Tennyson did not display. And it is noteworthy that in these poems, penetrated through and through with imagination in their structure and action, the style in many passages becomes simple and nervous, and loses the over-studied elaboration which often mars Tennyson's blank verse. In no poem in our literature does the language more fitly correspond to the thought, or

more nobly express the character, than in Arthur's last address to Guinevere. The whole poem, indeed, seems to us to mark Tennyson's highest point by its combination of imaginative power, splendour and dignity of versification, noble thought, and the deepest human pathos. And *The Passing of Arthur* is not unworthy to follow such a poem as *Guinevere.*

But, in spite of the excellence of these portions of the series, the *Idylls of the King* cannot be called a perfect poem, or even a series of perfect poems. They fail in the movement of life. They express admirably now this, now that aspect of life; each depicts with exquisite beauty and subtlety a certain phase in what might have been a noble tragedy, but the poet does not give us the process by which the one phase passed into the other; they are *tableaux*, not acts in a drama. The comparative deficiency in imaginative power which, we believe, accounts for Tennyson's failure to produce a great epic, accounts also, and more decidedly, for his comparative failure as a dramatist. In *Queen Mary*, the greatest as well as the first of his plays, there is consummate workmanship; every line tells, every speech adds to our conception of the characters, every scene is consistent and deeply thought out. The characters are finely depicted, especially that of the wretched Queen herself, and the undercurrent of popular feeling is indicated with admirable skill and truth. And there is splendid poetry in these plays. What can be finer than Mary's outburst of exultation at the prospect of a child, or than this beautiful description of Cranmer's going to the stake?

> He pass'd out smiling, and he walked upright;
> His eye was like a soldier's, whom the general
> He looks to, and he leans on as his God,
> Hath rated for some backwardness and bidd'n him
> Charge one against a thousand, and the man
> Hurls his soil'd life against the pikes and dies.

Nevertheless, as a drama *Queen Mary* is not successful. It is a succession of scenes with no true central interest, and leading to no real catastrophe; for the gradual consummation of the mere failure and blank misery of the Queen is no dramatic catastrophe. The play does not end, it goes out like a candle, and the last scene closes with a note of uncertainty. And, in spite of the excellence of particular scenes, they do not, except, indeed, the scene of Cranmer's recantation, possess the dramatic quality: they do not excite the spectator's interest and fix his attention on what is going forward. In a word, the play lacks movement; it contains admirable studies of certain moods and incidents in a life, but they are not linked together by the imaginative force of a true dramatist. After all, it is when we come to the songs which are interspersed in most of the plays that we recognize the true touch of the master:

> Hapless doom of woman happy in betrothing!
> Beauty passes like a breath and love is lost in loathing:
> Low, my lute: speak low, my lute, but say the world is nothing—
> Low, lute, low!
> Love will hover round the flowers when they first awaken:
> Love will fly the fallen leaf, and not be overtaken;
> Low, my lute! oh low, my lute! we fade and are forsaken—
> Low, dear lute, low!

This, or the "Dead mountain flowers" of *The Falcon*, or "To sleep! to sleep!" of *The Foresters*, would be dearly bartered for all the more strictly dramatic qualities of the plays.

For the more we study Tennyson the more are we convinced that his true greatness lies in his lyrical work. We do not wish to limit the phrase to songs, or, indeed, to any particular form of verse. He has often shown himself as great and as lyrical in blank verse as in rhyme, in poems of some length as in short snatches of song. His lyrical work includes the rhymeless "Tears, idle tears," as well as "Ask me no more," long and complex poems like *The Lotos-Eaters* or *The Day Dream*, as well as *Break, break, break*; it even includes narratives like *The Gardener's Daughter*. So long as it has the lyric quality—so long, that is, as it is the expression of a single dominant emotion—it matters not what its metre or its form may be; in all its forms Tennyson has shown himself its almost incomparable master. Lyric poetry, as we conceive it, is the reverse of dramatic; its essence is to have no movement, no development; it is the expression of one mood or scene. And in depicting single moods of emotion Tennyson is unrivalled. His lyrics have not the pregnant simplicity of Gray or Arnold, or, pre-eminently, Wordsworth; neither have they for the most part the airy music of Shakespeare, nor the unearthly melody of Shelley; but his strength lies in a peculiar combination of richness and delicacy, and a unique power of suggestiveness—that is, of surrounding his central thought with half-hinted associations and memories of beauty, and of illustrating it by blending it with some aspect of nature. If to these qualities we join the subtle metrical art of which Tennyson was a master, we shall gain some not wholly inadequate insight into the secret of his lyrical supremacy. Suggestiveness of language could hardly

be carried further, for instance, than in "Tears, idle tears," or in this stanza from the culminating section of *Maud*:

> Alas for her that met me,
> That heard me softly call,
> Came glimmering thro' the laurels
> At the quiet evenfall,
> In the garden by the turrets
> Of the old manorial hall.

But the same power is displayed in *Mariana*, one of the earliest, and in *Crossing the Bar*, almost the latest of his poems. Thus, in the stanza,

> Twilight and evening bell,
> And after that the dark!
> And may there be no sadness of farewell,
> When I embark,

with what subtle skill does the poet call up all the pathos and the mystery of night at sea in the single phrase "evening bell"—one of numberless instances in which his own exquisite criticism may be applied to himself:

> All the charm of all the Muses often flowering in a lonely word.

Again, if it is superfluous to quote any of the lyrics of *The Princess*, we may illustrate the delicate richness of the poet's art, and the felicity with which he made scientific truth yield him materials for poetry, by the few lines:

> Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
> Yon orange sunset waning slow:
> From fringes of the faded eve,
> Oh, happy planet, eastward go;

Till over thy dark shoulder glow
  Thy silver sister-world, and rise
  To glass herself in dewy eyes
That watch me from the glen below.

Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
  Dip forward under starry light,
And move me to my marriage morn,
  And round again to happy night.

Or, for an example of Tennyson's power of associating the aspects of nature with the mood he is depicting, take four lines from *The Palace of Art*, perhaps unequalled even among Tennyson's descriptive passages for their power of picturing a scene and of using it to intensify the impression of a certain emotional situation :

A still salt pool, lock't in with bars of sand,
  Left on the shore; that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
  Their moon-led waters white.

Is there in poetry any image of desolateness more impressive than that?

It is tempting to linger over these marvellous lyrics, whose

. . . . constant beauty doth inform
Stillness with love, and day with light,

but they are too familiar to need, or even to bear, much quoting, and Tennyson's position as a lyric poet is too well assured to need demonstrating. We come, however, to a less simple task when we turn from the form to inquire into the matter of all this splendid poetical achievement; when we ask, What has this incomparable artist to teach us? It is not an easy task, because it is always hard to estimate the original

value of teaching which has long been absorbed into the common stock of thought and belief; for Tennyson spoke his message to earlier generations than ours, and to us his words cannot come with the fresh power which our predecessors felt in them. It is not easy, again, because Tennyson was not a great original teacher, in the sense in which Wordsworth and Browning—to go no further back—were teachers. He did not, like Wordsworth, open men's eyes to see the "spirituality" and the "moral relations" of the material universe, nor did he, like Browning, give them a fresh insight into the secrets of character and the results of moral conflicts. He was not an independent creative force in the world of thought. Rather he has been a voice, clear and full-toned and commanding, giving expression to the thoughts and feelings which have inarticulately moved the men of his time, the reflection, in a medium of rich and delicate beauty, of the tendencies, the fears, the hopes, the wishes of the age. They are in his poetry because they were first in the hearts and minds of men; he echoes and reflects and interprets, he does not originate. But a poet, just because he is a poet, stimulates and strengthens by the force of his expression the feelings and thoughts which he expresses, and it is by his sensitiveness to the best tendencies of his age, and by the lasting beauty of the form in which he embodied them, that Tennyson has been a power and an inspiration to men.

In this function, however, he has shown himself peculiarly alive to certain broad and dominant thoughts, to which he has continually recurred, and which form the moral foundation of his poetical work. It is rather

strange to notice the contrast between the breadth and simplicity—we had almost said the commonplaceness—of these conceptions and the subtle complexity of the form in which they are cast. Tennyson is one of the most complex artists, but one of the plainest thinkers, among great writers. The framework of his poems, for instance, is almost always some very simple idea or incident, and the "moral" is usually equally plain. In not a few cases, notably *The May Queen* and *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*—the simplicity sinks into conventionality; but at the best his incidents are scarcely ever in themselves striking or original. So it is with his moral and religious conceptions. Freedom, law, progress, the conflict of soul and sense, doubt, death, and immortality form the recurrent keynotes of his teaching, and his treatment of them is plain and straightforward.

Thus from the first his political ideas centred round the two thoughts of freedom and law. Inspired, as we have seen, with all the political enthusiasm of the Reform Bill era, and retaining to the last, though almost against hope, his hope of the progress of man, he never dissociated freedom and progress from law. Burke might have written the three great political poems[1] of 1833, with their strong grasp of the value of progress "from precedent to precedent," their hatred of "the falsehood of extremes," their delight in the continuity of sound political growth:

> Love thou thy land, with love far-brought
> From out the storied Past, and used
> Within the Present, but transfused
> Thro' future time by power of thought.

[1] *Works*, pp. 64, 65.

True love *turned round on fixed poles*,
Love, that endures not sordid ends,
For English natures, freemen, friends,
Thy brothers and immortal souls.
. . . . . .
Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease.
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul.

So let the change which comes be free
To ingroove itself with that which flies,
And work, a joint of state, that plies
Its office, moved with sympathy.

And he never lost his faith in progress, for *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* must, like its predecessor, be taken as dramatic, and in one of his later poems [1] he foretold that:

. . . England, France, all man to be
Will make one people ere man's race be run.

This faith was, indeed, clouded by doubts, but they were doubts which were only latent from the first, being implicitly contained in the reverence for law which he always upheld.

Here his political beliefs touch on the one side his scientific, and on the other his ethical, ideas. Tennyson, like all the greatest men of his era, was profoundly imbued with the scientific conception of evolution, and the future to which he looks forward for the race is that of which evolution tells us. While Browning was anticipating these later conceptions in the culminating passage of *Paracelsus*, Tennyson was brooding over the ideas which inspired the close of the marriage sequel to *In Memoriam*:

[1] *Works*, p. 534.

. . . the crowning race

Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
Is Nature like an open book;

No longer half akin to brute,
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit;

If Tennyson feels and expresses, with terrible force, the scientific truth of the ruthlessness of Nature in the struggle for existence and in the waste of life, the proof of which has destroyed the old easy argument from design, it should be remembered that he has learnt from the same scientific conceptions the lesson of progress of

. . . one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

And his ethical teaching springs from the same central ideas of progress and law. No one, not even Browning, has more clearly seen that man is intended to grow from that which is "half-akin to brute," and that growth can only come through conflict in which the will gains at last its true freedom. The mystery of the human will profoundly impressed the poet's mind. Like Kant, he feels that this is the

. . . main-miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the world.[1]

But he also realized, with special keenness, the two-fold possibilities that are latent in the will. On the

[1] *Works*, p. 533.

one hand there is the power by which it moves upward on the path marked out for it—

> Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine—[1]

till, by means of moral conflict, freedom and law become one:

> . . . thro' a life of shocks,
> Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
> Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
> Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
> Commeasure perfect freedom.[2]

But, on the other side, there is the tremendous danger, never absent from Tennyson's mind, of the downward movement of the will. Nowhere is there a more vivid and haunting image of the enfeebled will than that of[3]

> . . . one whose footsteps halt,
> Toiling in immeasurable sand.

But the danger is not merely that the spiritual nature, the free will, of man grows weaker, but that the animal must grow stronger. The persistence in the poet's mind of this thought of the "wild beast" element in human nature is very remarkable. From *The Vision of Sin* to almost his latest volume, the thought is prominent. It is the underlying meaning of the *Idylls of the King* that "the base in man" must be "kept down,"[4] and the whole cycle "shadows sense at war with soul."[5] In *In Memoriam* we all remember the appeal to—

> Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die—

[1] *Works*, p. 247. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 42. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 235.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 463. [5] *Ibid.*, p. 475.

which closes a fine statement of the poet's evolutionary belief. The thought in several places takes the form of a haunting fear lest even in old age the struggle between the two principles should continue and the soul be worsted. This is the painful subject of *Lucretius*; it gives moral force to *Merlin and Vivien*, that vivid picture of the

> World-war of dying flesh against the life,
> Death in all life and lying in all love,
> The meanest having power upon the highest,
> And the high purpose broken by the worm.

And it inspires the thankfulness with which the issue of the conflict is proclaimed in one of the latest poems [1]:

> If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their own,
> I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
> No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
> Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute.
>
> I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
> Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire,
> But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last
> As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.

Now in all this keenly realized conflict there can be no momentary doubt which side the poet is taking. He has been one of the great forces of our time, making for purity against sensuality. With direct, unmistakable force, that is neither aided nor diverted by subtle

[1] *Works*, p. 873.

reasonings, he has proclaimed in clear tones the necessity of the victory of the soul over the flesh, if the destined progress is to be accomplished and the will is to be set free.

This is, after all, the main substance of Tennyson's religious thought, as well as of his ethical teaching. If closely questioned, the long series of his poems seems at first sight to yield little but the vague, half-despairing answers of blind faith which form the best-known passages of *In Memoriam*. Here, as in other matters, Tennyson was the echo and reflection of his age. With wonderful truth and subtlety he expressed in undying music all the dim uncertainty, the harassing doubts, of a generation which had in truth "no language but a cry." The exquisite statement of the problems that press upon us, and of the mood of troubled doubt in which we face them, has blinded many readers of *In Memoriam* to the fact that, after all, the poet offers no solution of the problems. It was enough for many minds to have their vague anxieties put into words; they read *In Memoriam* and were vaguely comforted. But there is more in it than a mere statement of problems which the poet cannot solve. What has made it a source of real strength and consolation is the conviction that, in spite of his keen sense of the difficulties encompassing us, still he, the poet himself, can retain his faith. The wonderfully toned series of poems, in which the gradual passage from dull grief through rebellion to final trust is depicted, has nothing to teach us but that one word, trust, and we are wrong to look for more. That such a mind, passing through such an experience, could still trust is consolation enough to those who share his sorrows and his doubts.

And we ought not to forget that mere trust is just what the poet means to force us back upon; there is nothing else. Throughout the poem, and indeed throughout all his poems, he emphasizes the impossibility of proving truth. The keynote is struck in the first stanza:

> Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
> Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,
> By faith, *and faith alone*, embrace,
> *Believing where we cannot prove*;

and it is reiterated, after countless variations, at the close:

> . . . Trust,
> With faith that comes of self-control,
> *The truths that never can be proved*
> Until we close with all we loved,
> And all we flow from, soul in soul.

It meets us again, towards the close of his life, in *The Ancient Sage*:

> . . . Nothing worthy proving can be proven,
> Nor yet disproven; wherefore thou be wise,
> Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
> And cling to Faith beyond the forms of Faith.

Is this, then, all? Are we to say that Tennyson's religion was after all nothing but "the sunnier side of doubt"? It is true that the unfortunate misunderstanding of a single passage has impressed this idea on the mind of a generation always ready to try to find rest in doubt. But the hackneyed lines[1]:

> There lives more faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds,

have a context, and the context shows that the very

[1] *Works*, p. 274.

last thing in the poet's mind was the idea of resting in doubt. It was through the conflict with doubt, he tells us, that his friend

> . . . came at length
> To find a stronger faith his own.

It is, in fact, another statement of the truth that in religion, as in morals, strength comes from conflict, and that the man, the soul, reaches faith, as he reaches purity, by a death-struggle with doubt. Compare almost the earliest and almost the latest of the poet's utterances :

> It is man's privilege to doubt,
> *If so be that from doubt at length,*
> *Truth may stand forth unmoved of change,*
> An image with profulgent brows,
> And perfect limbs, as from the storm
> Of running fires and fluid range
> Of lawless airs, at last stood out
> This excellence and solid form
> Of constant beauty. [1]

And at the close of his life his one prayer is that doubt may perish [2] :

> Steel me with patience! soften me with grief!
> Let blow the trumpet strongly while I pray,
> Till this embattled wall of unbelief
> My prison, not my fortress, fall away!
> Then, if Thou willest, let my day be brief,
> So Thou wilt strike Thy glory thro' the day.

"My prison, not my fortress." Doubt imprisons the soul, and man's true life is found in faith ; therefore he must "face the spectres of the mind" [3] if he would realize his own personality and free his soul.

[1] *Works*, p. 5. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 893. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

We do not say that Tennyson gives us a complete theology, nor that his religious utterances can satisfy a really inquiring mind. But they witness to more than the poet actually expressed, and allow us to feel that the faith, which at times seems to be a mere vague trust, contained in reality much of the definiteness of the Christian's belief. Thus his conviction of the worth of the human soul, so grandly expressed in the *Ode on the Duke of Wellington*—

> For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
> And break the shore, and evermore
> Make and break, and work their will;
> Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
> Round us, each with different powers,
> And other forms of life than ours,
> What know we greater than the soul?—

led him to a steady faith in immortality, indeed, to a firm grasp of the Christian doctrine of immortality.

> That each, who seems a separate whole,
> Should move his rounds, and fusing all
> The skirts of self again, should fall
> Remerging in the general soul,
>
> Is faith as vague as all unsweet;
> Eternal form shall still divide
> The eternal soul from all beside;
> And I shall know him when we meet:[1]

We may go further and claim for the poet whose greatest religious work begins with invoking the

> Strong Son of God, immortal Love,

and whose latest lyric declares his hope of seeing his "Pilot face to face"[2] hereafter—we may claim for him the name of Christian in the fullest sense. That he

[1] *Works*, p. 259. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 894.

had no very definite answer to many of our most persistent questionings was perhaps more the fault of his age than of himself; he was vague because he could not but reflect the uncertainty around him, and was haunted by the vastness of the mystery of life. But at least he buoyed men up by his own unconquerable faith in the soul and in God, and his latest message was one of hope[1]:

> The face of Death is towards the Sun of Life,
> His shadow darkens earth; his truer name
> Is "Onward," no discordance in the roll
> And march of that Eternal Harmony
> Whereto the worlds beat time, tho' faintly heard
> Until the great Hereafter. Mourn in hope!

[1] *Works*, p. 894.

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BROWNING,[1]

MR. BROWNING'S position as a poet is a peculiar one. In purely intellectual power he is, perhaps, greater than any English poet since Shakspeare; and combined with this he has almost universal sympathies and a very wide range of knowledge. And yet his actual influence, even among those who appreciate his poems, is not great. He stirs us up, he interests us, he compels our admiration; but his poetry is not, to any great extent, a guiding force in the intellectual life of the present day. One great cause of this want of influence is, we believe, that very intellectual power which is his distinguishing characteristic: or rather, it is the want of emotional force to balance the intellectual power. The truths which he sees, whether they be truths of the imagination or of observation only, are apprehended by the intellect, which analyses them, reasons from them, sets them in various lights, but fails to give them the *vivida vis* which is furnished by emotion penetrating and informing the results of intellectual power. Hence he is to a great extent lacking in persuasiveness, and the mind is even roused to antagonism by the subtle trains of reasoning in which he delights, and refuses to be convinced, though they may be logically correct. And as the subjects with which his intellect deals are chiefly old and much-

[1] Written in 1878.

debated problems, it is hardly to be expected that the actual answers which he gives to them can, in themselves, be of such originality as to form a new point of departure in thought. Rather, we must look for his special teaching in the method he adopts, and in a few great principles which underlie most of his utterances.

Of course, the most obvious reason to give for Mr. Browning's want of influence is his peculiar style. But as regards the difficulty of his poems, there has surely been a good deal of exaggeration: and what is true in the accusation of obscurity is true not so much of the actual grammatical construction and language in which the poems are written, as of the sequence of the thoughts. The language is never as smooth, but is very often quite as intelligible as that of Tennyson's deeper poems, *In Memoriam*, for example; and in many of Mr. Browning's poems, the reader finds each thought expressed in English far more lucid and direct than the intricate and turbid verbiage of Mr. Swinburne's dithyrambs. It is not to be expected, however, that poetry, the great characteristic of which is intellect, the great want emotional force, should be as easy of comprehension at first sight as that which deals with the simple passions and feelings of the heart; and we believe, further, that one reason why Mr. Browning's obscurity is so generally noticed is, that in his case the difficulty is not to any great extent counterbalanced by the rhythmical power or the subtle grace which is often a substitute for intelligibility in poets like Swinburne or Tennyson. The reader has only the logical meaning of the passage to deal with, there is no charm of melody to distract his

attention, and therefore he is more alive to the obscurity in the expression of the thought.

But though the difficulty of Mr. Browning's language may have been exaggerated by the indolence and inattention of hasty readers who have not had patience to get accustomed to the style, there can be no doubt that in the construction of an argument, or even in the statement of a fact, he is frequently very obscure. The thoughts are connected by very subtle trains of reasoning, which are often, however, suppressed altogether; while the illustrations, sometimes very far-fetched, are introduced with startling abruptness, or with a prolixity which converts them into digressions of the most distracting nature. An objection or a question is stated, and the reader naturally expects an answer, which indeed is given, but proves to have little or no apparent connexion with the main question, but is a reply to some allusion or suggestion which has slipped in with very little warning. If we read, for example, in the Pope's monologue in *The Ring and the Book*, his answer to the objection supposed to be raised by Euripides; or trace the sequence of the thoughts in *Fifine at the Fair*, which is made up of apparent digressions, where the poet seems to go off at the suggestion of a chance word or phrase, the peculiar obscurity of Mr. Browning's writings will be manifest.

But in the difficulty of his style Mr. Browning is not alone; many great poets have found it impossible to express deep thoughts to the satisfaction of shallow readers. What is remarkable in him is the singular disregard of melody and of the beauty of rhythm; the total want of charm about the form of his poems

is almost a unique phenomenon in art. For it is not, apparently, the common case of absolute inability to express melodiously thoughts in themselves highly poetical; for every now and then Mr. Browning gives us a short passage of almost perfect beauty of form, which makes his immediate relapse into harshness all the more tantalizing. Two or three lines, such as those in *Rudel to the Lady of Tripoli*—

> Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
> Across the waters to this twilight nook,
> —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook,

or a short poem such as *Love among the Ruins*, almost seem intended as proofs of his power over the form of verse, in spite of the many hundred lines which testify against it. And popular feeling, worthless as a test of other poetical qualities, but a sure judge of rhythm and "swing," has, by its acceptance of Mr. Browning's stirring ballads and lyrics, while almost ignoring his greater efforts, borne witness to the real melody and power of which he is capable. We should rather hold the true explanation of the rough and crude expression of his thought to be, not his ignorance of the value of form, but his intense desire to grasp the matter, to penetrate to the innermost meaning of the facts with which he is dealing. In this, as in some other points, he resembles Carlyle. Neither is without a genuine appreciation of beauty, even of mere superficial beauty in form and expression; but this must be subordinated in both to the more important claims of truth. So Carlyle, though one of the very few living[1] prose writers whose language

[1] Written in 1878.

can be something more than a mere means of expressing thought, is, as Mr. Lowell has said, "regardless of the outward beauty of form, sometimes almost contemptuous of it"; and Mr. Browning, with a far higher appreciation of beauty, and very considerable power over the language, is content to be rough and harsh in his eagerness to press on to the real meaning and innermost truth of his subject. And this seems to go deeper than the mere form of his verse; it is a pervading characteristic of his mind. An ardent and cultivated musician, he refuses to stop, where so many musicians stop, at the outward form of music, but tries to penetrate to the meaning of it. Thus he analyzes the message brought to him by an old Venetian "Toccata of Galuppi's"—

Oh Galuppi, Baldassaro, this is very sad to find!
I can hardly misconceive you; it would prove me deaf and blind;
But although I take your meaning, 'tis with such a heavy mind.
Here you come with your old music, and here's all the good it brings.
What, they lived once thus at Venice where the merchants were the kings:
Where S. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings—

using the music to summon before him all the vanished scene of splendour and youth with the inevitable thought, suggested by it, that

Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.

So he addresses "Master Hugues of Saxe Gotha," in

a way which is common among unmusical people, who secretly wish to depreciate the art, but which real lovers of music generally avoid with some scorn :

> Hist, but a word, fair and soft!
> Forth and be judged, Master Hugues!
> Answer the question I've put you so oft:
> What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?

And, above all, in *Abt Vogler* he rises to the height of his imaginative power in describing the content of music :

> What never had been, was now; what was, as it shall be anon;
> And what is—shall I say, matched both? for I was made perfect too.
> All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
> All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
> All through music and me.

Nothing more strikingly exemplifies Mr. Browning's prevailing intellectuality, and his eager pursuit of truth, than these efforts of his to penetrate beyond the form in the art which to most people has no definite meaning, no essence whatever except form. He cannot be contented with the vague descriptions of beautiful sounds, with the unmeaning demonstrations of pleasure which usually pass for musical criticism ; he must find something for the intellect to grasp, though of course he would own, as indeed he does in *Fifine at the Fair*, that the content of music is not so much thought as feeling, that

> Thought hankers after speech, while no speech may evince
> Feeling like music.

For this reason it is, of course, easier for him to find in the other branches of art a meaning on which his

thought can fasten, a message to be developed and analyzed. So in *Old Pictures at Florence*, he contrasts the perfect beauty of Greek sculpture with the manifold imperfections of the early Christian painters, not as to their form, but with regard to the meaning which each can afford for the intellect. Indeed, the very beauty of form in Greek art is to him a sign of inferiority, because the failings and shortcomings of the Italian painters reveal a consciousness of the deeper meaning which they were striving to express.

Again, to pass from art to real life, Mr. Browning seems equally to penetrate through the outward form of the human being, to look upon the body as the expression of the soul within, rather than as possessing beauty, and therefore value, in itself. And this is compatible with the strong feeling he has for physical beauty, or rather the feeling springs from his belief that soul is

> Transparent through the flesh, by parts which prove a whole,
> By hints which make the soul discernible by soul.

For the explanation which he gives in *Fifine at the Fair* of his interest in the body, and the beauty of it is, that

> . . . . bodies show me minds,
> And through the outward sign the inward grace allures.

So the disregard of the form of his poems, in his eager haste to express the matter, is only a particular case of the general characteristic of Mr. Browning's mind, which leads him

> To bring the invisible full into play!
> Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?

And though we may regret that he has carried his

principle so far as greatly to injure the poetical value of his writings—for, after all, art is the expression of thought or emotion by means of form, which cannot therefore with impunity be neglected—yet at the present time, when so much stress is laid on the mere mechanism of verse, and meaning is suffered to fall into the background, it is perhaps good that one of our greatest living poets should utter in every way a protest against the prevailing fashion, and stand forward as an obvious instance of the supremacy of matter over form.

Mere form by itself is capable of being brought to perfection by the artist, while the inner truth of things is an ideal to be striven after which can never be reached, and our apprehension of it, and our endeavours to present it as it is must always remain imperfect. So Mr. Browning's preference of matter to form is the result of what is perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of his mind, the belief that imperfection is a mark of progress, that man is superior to the beasts just because he is not made with all his powers complete for their work in his life, but must struggle onwards by means of failure in this world, to the perfection which can only be attained in the next. The thought, in various forms, recurs in almost every poem of any importance ; and though it is only a very clear apprehension of the Christian truth, that this life is a time of probation, and that for man perfection would mean failure, for it would mean standing still, while the law of his life is progress, yet this truth is set in so many different lights, it is shown underlying so many of the problems of life, so essential to the right understanding of character and the due

estimate of action, that we may consider it as the special lesson which it is given to Mr. Browning to teach us. Thus he applies it to art, and it forms the ground of the contrast already alluded to between the Greek and Italian art in *Old Pictures at Florence*:

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Be greater and grander the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

To-day's brief passion limits their range;
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else? they shall never change:
We are faulty—why not? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

Therefore the outward beauty of art declined, for with this idea of growth in imperfection it became the object of the early painters to leave the ideal, to turn to man as he is, and show the soul, the "new hopes" and "new fears" shining "through the flesh they fray." The perfection of Greek art is a sign of its limitation:

Shall Man, such step within his endeavour,
Man's face, have no more play and action
Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction?

Again, he applies it to scholarship in the *Grammarian's Funeral*, which, in spite of the painful grotesqueness of the form, is a grand declaration of

the poet's belief in the dignity of a lofty ideal, in the vain effort to reach which life is spent:

. . . before living he'd learn how to live—
No end to learning:
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive
Use for our earning.
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes:
"Live now or never!"
He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes!
Man has Forever."

. . . . . .

That low man seeks a little thing to do,
Sees it and does it:
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,
Dies ere he knows it.
That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.
That, has the world here—should he need the next,
Let the world mind him!
This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed,
Seeking shall find Him.

This idea of man's superiority because of his imperfection is of course primarily a religious idea, but it is a proof of the manner in which Mr. Browning's religious convictions penetrate and inform his whole intellectual and emotional nature, that, whatever the subject, this doctrine seems to be the explanation of the problem or the climax of the argument. As we have seen it employed to express the proper aim of art and learning, so it enters into his view of love, supplementing its imperfections, explaining its difficulties, and raising it from an earthly and merely sensuous passion to a work worthy of man, who "has Forever." *Dîs aliter visum*, turns mainly upon the application

of this doctrine to love. The woman whom, when young, the elderly scholar had the opportunity of loving and marrying, rebukes him passionately ten years later for having missed it only because he was old, and she was far below him in education and intellect:

> You loved, with body worn and weak:
> I loved, with faculties to seek:
> Were both loves worthless since ill-clad?
>
> Let the mere star-fish in his vault
> Crawl in a wash of weed, indeed,
> Rose-jacynth to the finger-tips:
> He, whole in body and soul, outstrips
> Man, found with either in default.
>
> But what's whole, can increase no more,
> Is dwarfed and dies, since here's its sphere.

The predominance of this idea in Mr. Browning is perhaps the explanation in part of the line which his poetical genius has taken in its development. As he himself expresses it:

> You saw me gather men and women,
> Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
> Enter each and all, and use their service,
> Speak from every mouth—the speech, a poem.

The greater number of his poems, and probably the most characteristic and the finest, are analyses of character either in the form of dialogue or monologue by the characters themselves, or, more rarely, in the poet's own person. His genius is essentially dramatic in one sense, namely, that he can leave his own personality to put himself into the position, or even into the very heart and soul of another person, "live or dead or fashioned by my fancy," and in that position and with that other mind allow his intellect and his

imagination to work as vigorously as if he was speaking his own sentiments in his own person. In this faculty he is, we venture to say, second to no poet, unless it be Shakspeare. Many can throw themselves into another character so as to represent it acting, talking, thinking, with consistency and truth; and this is the power of the imagination. But Mr. Browning exerts rather what we may call the imaginative intellect; not only does he endow his characters with life and truth, but in their persons he carries on the subtlest trains of reasoning, starting, however, only from the premises which the person in question would naturally assume, and therefore not necessarily true, or in accordance with the poet's own belief, but only consistent; and his imagination also seems to seize hold on their deepest emotions, and give words to them with a power which, we repeat, is more nearly equal to Shakspeare's similar power than is that of any other poet. In *The Last Ride Together*, for instance, the line—

> Who knows but the world may end to-night?—

may for depth and vividness of imaginative power be compared with Macduff's *He has no Children*, which is Mr. Ruskin's highest instance of this kind of imagination. Again, for the more intellectual working of Mr. Browning's imagination, take the passage in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, in which he suddenly develops a theory of the purpose of evil, ingenious and impressive in itself, and at the same time perfectly consistent with the imaginary character of the bishop:

> Some think, Creation's made to show him forth:
> I say it's meant to hide him all it can,
> And that's what all this blessed evil's for.

But in what is more strictly dramatic power, the power of representing action, Mr. Browning is notably deficient. The whole interest of his dramas or dramatic monologues lies in the varying states of mind of the characters represented. The action is nothing, and the personages are interesting to the poet, not because of what they do, but of what they think and feel. What he delights to analyze and to describe are the subtle changes of feeling, the hidden trains of thought that are overlooked by most observers, but nevertheless give to action its real value; it is therefore immaterial to him whether the resulting action fails or succeeds; indeed, failure is often an indication of a loftier ideal than any which success has aimed at.

For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail;
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me;
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

. . . . . .

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work" must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price:
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

But all the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All, I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

This passage explains better than any other the poet's eagerness to analyze character, and his interest in the failures rather than the successes of his personages, real or imaginary; and the same explanation is given in a different way in *Fifine at the Fair*. In order to discover the real tendency of the faults and failures in human lives we must "only get close enough."

And, consequent upon the learning how from strife
Grew peace—from evil, good—came knowledge that, to get
Acquaintance with the way o' the world, we must nor fret
Nor fume, on altitudes of self-sufficiency,
But bid a frank farewell to what—we think—should be,
And, with as good a grace, welcome what is—we find.

So he collects characters from all countries and from all periods, obscure as René Gentilhomme, or illustrious as Andrea del Sarto, or the mere creations of his own imagination, as Bishop Blougram, and strives by means of them "to get acquaintance with the way o' the world," not hiding their faults, but trying to see them as they saw them, and to

Hold the balance, shift
The weight from scale to scale, do justice to the drift
Of nature, and explain the glories by the shames
Mixed up in man, one stuff miscalled by different names
According to what stage i' the process turned his rough,
Even as I gazed, to smooth—only get close enough.

Owing to this, his favourite method, it is of course

difficult to say in any one case whether the thoughts put forward are Mr. Browning's real convictions, or only the dramatic workings of the mind he is investigating; but the very method itself affords us an insight into the poet's mind, gives us his estimate of human nature, and shows us the character and limits of the toleration which is so prominent in him. And if we find, in addition, that certain thoughts are continually coming up, certain explanations of conduct continually put forward, we are justified in taking these to be genuine principles held by Mr. Browning himself, and not merely by his characters.

Nevertheless, we believe that partly by the adoption of this method, partly by the doctrine which it illustrates, Mr. Browning has been considerably influenced in his view of truth. For the continued process of reasoning from other men's premises, of analyzing actions not so much in their relation to absolute right and wrong as in relation to the position and character of the actor, could hardly fail in some degree to affect the perception of truth. And if we add to this Mr. Browning's belief that man advances by means of failure, that

> Life succeeds in that it seems to fail,

we have sufficient explanation of his belief that truth is perhaps, after all, not to be attained by man. He must try to attain to it, and it certainly exists and will hereafter be reached; but in this life there may be no such thing as absolute truth which we can grasp, though every effort to lay hold of it brings us nearer to it. So he seems to turn from the pursuit with the conviction

that in this, as in other things, we must be content to—

> . . . Learn, by failure, truth is forced
> To manifest itself through falsehood. . . .

His latest poem, *The Two Poets of Croisic*,[1] partly deals with the effect on the "actual sense and thought" of a sudden, complete perception of truth; and he pronounces it to be incompatible with the conditions of our life here:

> I think no such direct plain truth consists
> With actual sense and thought and what they take
> To be the solid walls of life: mere mists—
> How such would, at that truth's first piercing, break
> Into the nullity they are!—slight lists
> Wherein the puppet-champions wage, for sake
> Of some mock-mistress, mimic war: laid low
> At trumpet-blast, there's shown the world, one foe!

But by this "mimic war" and the "simulated thunder-claps which tell us counterfeit truths,"

> . . . we gain enough—yet not too much—
> Acquaintance with that outer element
> Wherein there's operation (call it such!)
> Quite of another kind than we the pent
> On earth are proper to receive. Our hutch
> Lights up at the least chink, let roof be rent—
> How inmates huddle, blinded at first spasm,
> Cognisant of the sun's self through the chasm!

The utter falseness of our ordinary life is shown in the most vivid way by the "vapoury films, enwoven circumstance" that could obscure the "fame pearl-pure" of Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book*. The monk's sermon at the end of the poem describes with great

[1] Written in 1878.

power the blackness of the night of falsehood round the "fame o' the martyr," which deepens at each effort made to dissipate it, till only

> One wave of the hand of God amid the worlds
> Bids vapour vanish, darkness flee away,
> And leave the vexed star culminate in peace
> Approachable no more by earthly mists.

And the melancholy lesson he draws from the whole history is the rarity of even such a tardy triumph of truth :

> How many chaste and noble sister-fames
> Wanted the extricating hand, and lie
> Strangled, for one Pompilia proud above
> The welter, plucked from the world's calumny,
> Stupidity, simplicity—who cares?

Of all his poems, *The Ring and the Book* contains the finest and most complete presentation of Mr. Browning's theory of truth. For while the lesson he draws from the whole is

> . . . That our human speech is nought,
> Our human testimony false, our fame
> And human estimation words and wind,

the poem itself is a declaration of the reality of truth, of the utter blunder of the common conclusion in all such cases—"there is much to be said on both sides," or in other words, there is no possibility of finding the truth, and therefore probably there is no truth ; at least, we need not trouble about it. Unless the truth is seen purely and absolutely, without any mixture of error, the facts narrated are inexplicable, and all attempts to explain them plunge deeper and deeper into falsehood. Say there is some truth on

Guido's side, some on Pompilia's, and the whole becomes again confusion worse confounded: defend Pompilia and Caponsacchi from any point of view but one, and the defence is a worse falsehood than the attack; for it will be, as the poet shows in the wonderful speech of Pompilia's advocate, a perversion of the deepest moral laws, a darkening of the original light of right and wrong. The conclusion would seem to be: there is truth, but it is almost impossible that man can discover it; this story is a labyrinth to which there is only one clue, any other will lead you utterly astray, and, apparently, only God can in such cases hold that one clue.

> I demand assent
> To the enunciation of my text
> In face of one proof more that "God is true
> "And every man a liar"—that who trusts
> To human testimony for a fact
> Gets this sole fact—himself is proved a fool;
> Man's speech being false, if but by consequence
> That only strength is true! while man is weak,
> And, since truth seems reserved for heaven not earth,
> Plagued here by earth's prerogative of lies,
> Now learns to love and long for what, one day,
> Approved by life's probation, he may speak.

In estimating Mr. Browning's view of truth, we must remember both clauses of the text: if "every man is a liar" and earth has a "prerogative of lies," yet "God is true" and truth is "reserved for heaven."

In *Fifine at the Fair* he develops in an elaborate image his view of the process by which—

> By practice with the false, we reach the true.

Just as in swimming, the body is completely

immersed in water, and is kept alive only by "man's due breath of air i' the nostrils, high and dry," and as any struggle to

> . . . Ascend breast-high : wave arms wide free of tether,
> Be in the air and leave the water altogether,

results in total submersion, and loss of the little air enjoyed before, so, he says :

> I liken to this play o' the body, fruitless strife
> To slip the sea and hold the heaven, my spirit's life
> 'Twixt false, whence it would break, and true where it would bide.
> I move in, yet resist, am upborne every side
> By what I beat against, an element too gross
> To live in, did not soul duly obtain her dose
> Of life-breath, and inhale from truth's pure plenitude
> Above her, snatch and gain enough to just illude
> With hope that some brave bound may baffle evermore
> The obstructing medium, make who swam henceforward soar;
> Gain scarcely snatched when, foiled by the very effort, sowse,
> Underneath ducks the soul, her truthward yearnings dowse
> Deeper in falsehood! ay, but fitted less and less
> To bear in nose and mouth old briny bitterness
> Proved alien more and more : . . . .
> . . . . and yet our business with the sea
> Is not with air, but just o' the water, watery :
> We must endure the false, no particle of which
> Do we acquaint us with, but up we mount a pitch
> Above it, find our head reach truth, while hands explore
> The false below.

Here the attainment of truth is represented as not totally impossible for man, but it can only be reached by aid of the false, and in glimpses and snatches.

> . . . . . Life means—learning to abhor
> The false, and love the true, truth treasured snatch by snatch,
> Waits counted at their worth.

By each effort to investigate the reality of what

we see, which is merely show and illusion, we are raised for an instant into the true, we advance a step, though we seem to gain nothing. This progress in individual cases, towards truth, by means of falsehood, is the same doctrine as that which is developed in *A Death in the Desert* in regard to the general growth of the whole race. The poem consists mainly of a long monologue, supposed to be spoken by S. John, just before his death in a cave, whither he has been carried to escape the persecution. The aged Apostle foresees the doubts and difficulties which would hinder faith in future times, and tries "to help to bear it with you all," and to relieve those who must undergo them. He imagines the questioner doubting of the fact of Christ's existence, because of the uncertainty of human testimony at such a distance of time. The answer begins by laying down the great principle underlying all Mr. Browning's thought:

> I say that man was made to grow, not stop;
> That help, he needed once, and needs no more,
> Having grown but an inch by, is withdrawn:
> For he hath new needs, and new helps to these.
> This imports solely, man should mount on each
> New height in view; the help whereby he mounts,
> The ladder-rung his foot has left, may fall,
> Since all things suffer change save God the Truth.

And again, man is

> Lower than God who knows all and can all,
> Higher than beasts which know and can so far
> As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
> Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
> While man knows partly but conceives beside,
> Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,

> And in this striving, this converting air
> Into a solid he may grasp and use,
> Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
> Not God's, and not the beasts'.

There is evident danger, of course, in thus including the perception of truth among those qualities of man which advance by means of failure, whose function, indeed, is to fail, and only thereby to succeed ; with the other faculties, failure and imperfection only affect them, only prove their weakness ; for instance, the imperfection of human love only proves the weakness of the emotion, not necessarily any shortcoming in the object loved : but to ascribe failure, inevitable failure, to man's quest of truth may be taken just as well to mean the non-existence of the object as the weakness of the human faculty. But Mr. Browning does not leave us in doubt as to his belief in an ultimate reality, in a truth underlying all these mists and shows. Indeed, for him there are two great realities :

> Truth inside, and outside, truth also ; and between
> Each, falsehood that is change, as truth is permanence.
> The individual soul works through the shows of sense,
> (Which, ever proving false, still promise to be true,)
> Up to an outer soul as individual too ;
> And, through the fleeting, lives to die into the fixed,
> And reach at length "God, man, or both together mixed."

Still, we may ask whether all that lies between the soul and God, "truth inside, and outside, truth also," is falsehood ; for that will include all the manifestations of God, all revelation, all the methods by which man has thought to draw near to God. The answer to this question brings us definitely to the subject of Mr. Browning's hold on Christianity.

It must be owned that if, as a matter of fact, he believes that the events recorded in the Gospels really happened, this is little more than an accidental circumstance : it does not seem to him to be of any real importance whether they did happen or not. In *A Death in the Desert*, the question as to the reality of Christ's miracles is not avoided but neglected as unimportant. The belief in them certainly was created, and thereby came belief in Christ ; but as to their reality, the Apostle does not pronounce :

> I say, that miracle was duly wrought
> When, save for it, no faith was possible.
> Whether a change were wrought i' the shows o' the world,
> Whether the change came from our minds which see
> Of shows o' the world so much as and no more
> Than God wills for His purpose . . .
> . . . I know not; such was the effect.

But when the further objection arises—

> . . . The fault was, first of all, in thee,
> Thy story of the places, names, and dates,
> Where, when and how the ultimate truth had rise,
> —Thy prior truth, at last discovered none,
> Whence now the second suffers detriment—

the answer is once more the appeal to the necessity of growth for man :

> Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
> From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
> From what once seemed good, to what now proves best,

which clearly leaves it in doubt whether the " story of the places, names, and dates " may not be all " vain " and " mistake." And the Pope, in *The Ring and the Book*, justifies this uncertainty even more clearly. He thoroughly believes, he says, the " tale " of " love

without a limit," which he finds revealed; but this only seems to apply to the innermost truth, the love revealed by the story, for as to the external facts, he goes on :

> . . . . whether a fact,
> Absolute, abstract, unconditioned truth,
> Historic, not reduced to suit man's mind,
> Or only truth reverberate, changed, made pass
> A spectrum into mind, the narrow eye,—
> The same and not the same, else unconceived—
> Though quite conceivable to the next grade
> Above it in intelligence,—as truth,
> Easy to man were blindness to the beast
> By parity of procedure,—the same truth
> In a new form, but changed in either case :
> What matter so intelligence be filled?
> . . . . so my heart be struck,
> What care I,—by God's gloved hand or the bare.

Here we see very plainly the influence of Mr. Browning's theory of truth. The only two truths being the soul and God, "and between each, falsehood," the method by which God works upon the soul must be by means of falsehood, or at best, of "the shows o' the world." As they are only shows, "mere mists," the question whether any particular combination of them really took place or not is insignificant, and the poet treats it doubtfully and vaguely. In *The Two Poets of Croisic*, indeed, he describes a direct message from God to man as a setting aside of these intermediate shows :

> . . . . all the universe
> Being abolished, all 'twixt God and him—
> Earth's praise or blame, its blessing or its curse,
> Of one and the same value,—to the brim
> Flooded with truth for better or for worse.

But in the end, as we have seen, he pronounces "such direct plain truth" impossible, in general, for us; we should become too conscious of the illusion of the common conditions of our life.

Of course, there is nothing new in this acceptance of the inner truth of Christianity along with doubt, or even denial, of the facts of the Gospel history. In Mr. Browning's case, however, we must be careful, first, to take it in connexion with his general view of truth and falsehood, and of the unreality of external things; and secondly, to remember the exceedingly firm hold that he has on the inner truth or rather on several of the essential truths of Christianity. Mr. Browning deals with the great speculative difficulties of the day, not as if he himself was vitally interested in solving them, but as desirous of helping others, and of affording them an insight into the unity and coherence of his own faith. And we believe that the cause of this courage in thus stating and meditating upon objections to Christianity may be found in the words put into the mouth of the Pope in *The Ring and the Book*, who has just asked the question, inspired by the worthlessness of contemporary Christian practice, "Is the thing we see salvation?" He is quick to answer for himself:

> I
> Put no such dreadful question to myself,
> Within whose circle of experience burns
> The central truth, Power, Wisdom, Goodness,—God.

When Mr. Browning is discussing religious difficulties, even when he seems to be refining away the facts on which, for most, our religion rests, he always apparently possesses a confidence for which these

words are the warrant; within his "circle of experience" the "central truth" does really "burn," and that truth is God. His religion works from the centre to the circumference, from the Being of God to the mode in which He has revealed Himself to man; and in the Being of God the chief, the one essential fact that he finds is Love, on which fact we may say that he builds his faith:

> In youth I looked to these very skies,
> And probing their immensities,
> I found God there, His visible power;
> Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
> Of the power, an equal evidence
> That His love, there too, was the nobler dower.
> For the loving worm within its clod,
> Were diviner than a loveless god
> Amid his worlds, I dare to say.

And in *A Death in the Desert* he argues that man must justly call himself "first, last, and best of things," unless he acknowledges that, in God, Love co-exists with might and will:

> Since if man prove the sole existent thing
> Where these combine, whatever their degree,
> However weak the might or will or love,
> So they be found there, put in evidence—
> He is as surely higher in the scale
> Than any might with neither love nor will,
> As life, apparent in the poorest midge,
> Is marvellous beyond dead Atlas' self,
> Given to the nobler midge for resting-place!

To give a complete representation of the great part which Love has in our conception of God, the poet imagines with wonderful power and truth the loveless god of the mere savage, in *Caliban upon*

Setebos, or Natural Theology in the Island, which is Caliban's meditation upon the strange freaks and capricious power of "his dam's god, Setebos." The poem comes immediately after *A Death in the Desert*, as if to emphasize the cardinal doctrine of the one, that God's essence is love, and that

> Life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
> And hope and fear, ...
> Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
> How love might be, hath been indeed, and is,

by the terrible image, in the other, of the loveless power and will which Caliban has fashioned by reasoning from the phenomena of the world and of his own nature. The savage cannot imagine a loving God; even that which he believes to be "over Setebos" is not love, but rather "something quiet," as distinguished from Setebos' restless activity, which "came of being ill at ease." And therefore, though he believes in "the Quiet," yet he "never spends much thought nor care that way," because the Quiet is only the germ of the logical conception of a First Cause, necessary, even to Caliban, in order to complete his theory of the universe, as the tortoise on which the elephant stands is necessary to the Hindoo philosopher, but of no practical importance, because, unlike Setebos, it does not "make itself feared through what it does." Few imaginative pictures cast such a dreary light upon the possibilities of our intellectual speculations, because it is so terribly complete in itself, and because the elimination of Love from our idea of God is all that stands between us and it. But the certainty of Mr. Browning's grasp of that idea enables him with

impunity to play with such a subject; he is "very sure of God," and therefore Setebos has no terrors for him.

Now it is from his firm belief in God's Love that the poet has attained to the two great Christian truths which so continually come up in his writings, viz., the Incarnation and Immortality.

In the awful vision of *Easter-Day*, which represents the soul standing before the Judge, when He has allowed it to keep the world it has chosen, but has stopped its exultation by showing the utter insufficiency of all that earth has, all its beauty, all its art, its science and philosophy, to satisfy the man when "the goal's a ruin like the rest," the wretched soul takes refuge in love, and prays to be allowed that only. But this also is denied, even while it is granted, by showing the uselessness of love without God's Love:

. . . . Now take love! Well betide
Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
The show of love for the name's sake,
Remembering every moment Who
Beside creating thee unto
These ends, and these for thee, was said
To undergo death in thy stead
In flesh like thine: so ran the tale.
What doubt in thee could countervail
Belief in it? Upon the ground
"That in the story had been found
Too much love! How could God love so?"
He who in all His works below
Adapted to the needs of man,
Made love the basis of the plan,—
Did love, as was demonstrated:
While man, who was so fit instead
To hate, as every day gave proof,—
Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,

> Both could and did invent that scheme
> Of perfect love; 't would well beseem
> Cain's nature thou wast wont to praise,
> Not tally with God's usual ways!

The fact that man possesses love is so far from being a proof that he invented the "scheme of perfect love," that it rather proves that God who gave him the love also gave him that final climax of love which is reached in the Incarnation and Atonement. So the poet rises from the love which is shown in the outer world, from the love which man feels in himself to "the love which tops the might, the Christ in God." The argument that the presence of love in us is the proof of Christ is a main part of *A Death in the Desert*:

> . . When, beholding that love everywhere,
> He reasons, "Since such love is everywhere,
> And since ourselves can love and would be loved,
> We ourselves make the love, and Christ was not—"
> How shall ye help this man who knows himself,
> That he must love and would be loved again,
> Yet, owning his own love that proveth Christ,
> Rejecteth Christ through very need of Him?

The Incarnation, thus viewed as the necessary completion of all we think or feel about God, ensures the truth of the whole system, of which it is the climax. The Pope, in *The Ring and the Book*, uses it to explain the mystery of sin and sorrow:

> I can believe this dread machinery
> Of sin and sorrow, would confound me else,
> Devised,—all pain, at most expenditure
> Of pain by Who devised pain,—to evolve,
> By new machinery in counterpart,

> The moral qualities of man—how else?—
> To make him love in turn and be beloved,
> Creative and self-sacrificing too,
> And thus eventually God-like.

In this poem and in *Saul* we find rather a different view from that which is given in *A Death in the Desert*, and in *Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day*. For in these, as we have seen, the love that is in the world and in man is made to lead us up to the perfect love of God manifested in Christ: in *Saul*, and in *The Ring and the Book*, we find the thought that, while power and intelligence are plainly visible to us, we fail, in our present state, to see the perfect goodness of God. To complete, then, what is wanting, Christianity gives us the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Atonement:

> What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God—
> But just the instance which this tale supplies
> Of love without a limit? So is strength,
> So is intelligence; let love be so,
> Unlimited in its self-sacrifice,
> Then is the tale true and God shows complete.

But, if there is a contradiction between the two, we should imagine that the first, the Incarnation proved by God's Love, is Mr. Browning's own conviction, as more in accordance with the general tendency of his mind; while the second, God's Love proved by the Incarnation, may be adopted to suit the characters into whose mouths it is put. In either case, the manifestation of God's Love by the Incarnation is the climax of religion, the triumph of Christianity. Thus, at the end of the wonderful *Epistle of Karshish, the Arab Physician*, in which he relates his analysis of the case of Lazarus, whom he has seen; after describing

it as madness caused by the epileptic trance from which a "Nazarene Physician" roused him, he gives with affected contempt, mingled with terror, Lazarus' belief that his Healer was

> . . . . God Himself,
> Creator and sustainer of the world,
> That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile!

But though he affects to despise it as a "trivial matter" not to be compared with the "blue-flowering borage" he has discovered, yet at the end the correspondence between Lazarus' belief and the innate longing of man for God's Love draws him back, as it were, unwillingly:

> The very God! think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too,—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!"
> The madman saith He said so; it is strange.

The same thrilling joy at the vision of an Incarnate God suffering for man, and thereby manifesting His love, is the climax of the magnificent ascent from earth to heaven, from human to divine, which is the subject of *Saul*:

> 'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
> In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
> A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
> Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
> Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

Here we have the other greater truth so firmly held by Mr. Browning, the immortality of the soul, combined with the truth of the Incarnation. Nothing in modern poetry is finer than the gradual development of the great song with which David cheers the vexed spirit of Saul. From the peaceful pastoral scenes which he knows so well, and the varied incidents of national life, the burial song, the "glad chaunt of the marriage," the sacred chorus as the Levites go up to the altar, and then the triumphant celebration of Saul's personal greatness, he passes on, in his effort to find a subject which shall restore to the king his delight in living, to the joys of the spirit which in old age shall rejoice in the results of its own past deeds: and even after death he shall not seem to die, for the record of his deeds shall be transmitted graven on the rock, to all posterity, and "unborn generations" shall have their part in his being. Here, having reached the height of merely human blessings, standing where Positivism, with its immortality of renown, is forced to stop, he is dissatisfied, longing for something further:

> . . Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
> I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
> I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
> As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's heart to dispense!

Here we have the same thought as that which is prominent in *La Saisaiz*—viz. the utter insufficiency of the Positivist idea of immortality to content man's longing, and the effort to explore further: only in his latest poem the exploration is carried on by means of close reasoning, in "Saul" by an inspired burst of prophecy, in which David, having witnessed to

God's perfection in all His works, declares his belief in the perfection of His love, which shall give to Saul one gift far beyond the earthly abundance that he already has, the gift of eternal life.

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night.
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows?—or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure;
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

And the means by which this last gift will be bestowed will be the final revelation of God's Love in the Atonement, the "weakness in strength," the Human Hand throwing "open the gates of new life to thee."

The certainty of immortality thus founded upon our certainty of God's love, is again declared by Mr. Browning in *Christmas Eve*:

He who endlessly was teaching,
Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
What love can do in the leaf or stone,
. . . . . .
Would never need that I, in turn,
Should point him out defect unheeded,
And show that God had yet to learn
What the meanest human creature needed,
—Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
. . . . . .
No, love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
Has ever been the sole good of life in it,
The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.

And the hopelessness of ever seeing the one truth, unless we first possess the other, is finely shown in *Cleon*, who, like David in *Saul*, dismisses the Positivist hope of immortality with contempt, but sees no greater hope beyond it, because he does not know God as Love. And, therefore, to the heathen poet the thought which to the Christian is a source of rejoicing, viz. the consciousness of man's failure to reach the ideal that he has power to form, is a deep discouragement; "most progress is most failure, thou sayest well." To him immortality is suggested, though he cannot believe in it, by the soul's unlimited desire for joy which cannot here be satisfied; to Rabbi Ben Ezra by the object of man's existence, the service of God, which is attained only after death, after the "machinery" of this life has fitted the soul for that purpose; to Pompilia by the undying love which cannot find its full manifestation in this troubled world, and therefore necessitates a world beyond it. In all these cases, and many others, we see the conception of immortality entering into every part of Mr. Browning's experience of life, dignifying things that would otherwise seem trivial, making perfect the manifold imperfections of this world. The grandest expression of this is in *Abt Vogler*, who is led to the subject by his regret at the quick vanishing of the "palace of music" he has reared:

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and Maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! what was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven a perfect round.
All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by.

It is this conviction of the future, this intense belief that "no work begun shall ever pause for death," that raises Mr. Browning's interest in man, and his persistent examination and analysis of characters and deeds which many would think unworthy to be touched, to a dignity which would not be possible if human life were bounded by this world, or even if the future life were to be, as so many believe, entirely separate and distinct in its nature from this. A future life in which nothing of our present existence survives, which is merely the reward, and not the result, of the good which has been attained here, is not Mr. Browning's conception of our promised immortality; and therefore to him all these traits of character that had almost perished, these persons and deeds that but for him no one would have remembered, are of intense interest, because in his eyes they have an eternal significance.

Thus the body, which in itself is nothing, has yet the greatest importance as the "dress" of the soul, as the means by which the soul is recognized by another

soul, as the material which the soul shapes and transforms in its upward progress:

"But the soul is not the body;" and the breath is not the flute;
Both together make the music; either marred and all is mute.

Therefore, though the poet appears at first sight to be a spiritualist of the most transcendental kind, yet one quickly perceives that for him the body is not only the empty show that a false philosophy would make it, but when informed by the soul has a meaning for all eternity:

But the time will come,—at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life to come in the old one's stead.

And though, in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* the one side is stated most forcibly and truly—

To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?—

yet there follows immediately the other side with equal truth:

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole."
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul.

We believe that a conscientious study of Mr. Browning's various hints concerning the relation

between soul and body is likely to be of great value to anyone who wishes to find the just and Christian mean between a false spiritualism on the one side and a false materialism on the other. In such an endeavour, poems like *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, *Fifine at the Fair*, *Evelyn Hope*, *The Flight of the Duchess* (with its wonderful picture of the soul subduing and controlling the body to its own purposes) will, we believe, point to the true solution of the problem, more by the imaginative power with which the work of either is presented, than by any reasoned statement of the exact relations between them.

Lastly, we may say the same of Mr. Browning's treatment of love. Few poets have given greater prominence to the lower element in love, the purely passionate or even sensuous element. Few poets have shown themselves more conscious of the power of physical beauty in determining love, or have described it with greater energy and warmth. In his dramatic poems he seems to have a special insight into the deepest emotions, whether of disappointed or of gratified passion. In *Pippa Passes*, or in *In a Gondola*, or in *Too Late*, these are depicted with a vigour and a truth which testifies to the poet's perception of the importance of the lower, or animal element in human love. And yet we will venture to say that no poet has ever risen to greater heights of spirituality in this particular sphere of his art. Love is a prominent subject in very many of his poems, and wherever the character represented will allow of it, he lifts it far above the region of mere passion, in which, nevertheless, the feeling had its rise, into the future life, in which the pure self-sacrificing love which has

begun on earth will find its full development. Thus Pompilia, in the splendid burst of emotion which ends her dying monologue, dwells upon these two points, the self-sacrifice of true love, and its continuance hereafter :

> Ever with Caponsacchi! otherwise
> Here alone would be failure, loss to me—
> How much more loss to him, with life debarred
> From giving life, love locked from love's display,
> The daystar stopped its task that makes night morn!
> O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
> No work begun shall ever pause for death!
> Love will be helpful to me more and more
> I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,
> My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!

This it is, then, that raises Mr. Browning's conception of love : he means by it not merely a moment's passion which shall sooner or later pass away, but a life of love; and his belief in the continuity of our life to all eternity gives therefore to love the highest meaning, even when "the obvious human bliss" which first drew two souls together has passed. So, in the beautiful stanzas *By the Fireside*, the speaker recalls the "moment, one and infinite," whose "product," had he not seized it, might have been failure, as in *Dîs aliter visum*, but which he did not suffer to let slip, and therefore

> I am named and known by that moment's feat:
> There took my station and degree;
> So grew my own small life complete,
> As nature obtained her best of me—
> One born to love you, sweet!

And the justification for this high estimate of the worth of that one moment is the same as Pompilia's

prolongation of the work of love into the next world :

> My own, see where the years conduct!
> At first, 'twas something our two souls
> Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
> In each now: on, the new stream rolls,
> Whatever rocks obstruct.
>
> Think, when our one soul understands
> The great Word which makes all things new,
> When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
> How will the change strike me and you
> In the house not made with hands?
>
> Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
> Your heart anticipate my heart,
> You must be just before, in fine,
> See and make me see, for your part,
> New depths of the divine!

Even in the unpleasant *Red Cotton Night-cap Country*, we get a glimpse, amidst all the mean and horrible circumstances of the story, of the poet's own ideal of love, which is ready to sacrifice itself for the sake of raising the loved one to a higher level :

> . . . Friend, I do not praise her love!
> True love works never for the loved one so,
> Nor spares skin-surface, smoothening truth away.
> Love bids touch truth, endure truth, and embrace
> Truth, though, embracing truth, love crush itself.
> "Worship not me, but God!" the angels urge:
> That is love's grandeur.

We cannot understand Mr. Browning's double treatment of love, so passionate and yet so spiritual, unless we bear in mind his similar treatment of body and soul, to both of which he assigns their due proportion in man's nature, because both are facts

which must be accepted. Both elements, in the same way, exist in human love; and the poet, whose notion of art is that it is

> The love of loving, rage
> Of knowing, seeing, feeling the absolute truth of things
> For truth's sake, whole and sole, nor any good, truth brings
> The knower, seer, feeler, beside,

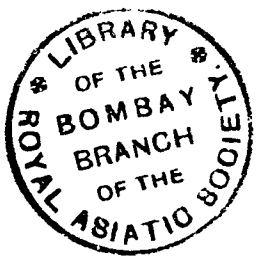
must take them as they are: Mr. Browning's superiority over other poets, who make the lower element prominent, is that by his acceptance of both he has raised both to a height which few have been able to reach. The love which he describes would be unworthy were it only the momentary passion: as he holds it to be the eternal union of two souls, marriage as distinct from love in the common sense, he is able, speaking now for once confessedly in his own person, to show how man is dignified and exalted by it:

> God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her!
> This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
> This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
> Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
> Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you
> There in turn I stand with them and praise you.
> Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
> But the best is when I glide from out them,
> Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
> Come out on the other side, the novel
> Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
> Where I hush and bless myself with silence[1]

In conclusion, then, we should wish our readers to take this as the noblest characteristic of Mr. Browning's

[1] *One Word More.*

genius : this power of exalting men and man's deeds, not by idealizing him, or by taking him out of the real conditions of his life, but by giving him his true dignity as an immortal being, whom God's love has placed here to grow and to prepare himself for a wider, more perfect life hereafter. We cannot fail to learn from Mr. Browning's poems a higher and nobler, because a truer, conception of mankind ; for he bases his sympathy with men, and his firm belief in their great destiny, on a truth that can never alter, the truth that God is Love.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THE POETRY OF DOUBT.—ARNOLD AND CLOUGH.[1]

IN the account of Julius Hare, prefixed to the *Guesses at Truth*, we are told that he made a special entry in some autobiographical memoranda as to the date when he first read Wordsworth. "To him, as to so many others, that was an epoch in his life," says his biographer; and we may add that the influence is to be traced in almost every line of his literary work. Again, every reader of J. S. Mill's autobiography will recollect his account of the prolonged melancholy which came over him when a young man. From this, he says, he was relieved chiefly by reading Wordsworth. These two instances are merely casual illustrations of the great influence which Wordsworth exerted on the minds of the generation immediately succeeding his own; and we have called attention to them now in order that we may have a standard whereby to compare the poets of our time with those of other periods. We have taken Wordsworth as perhaps the greatest instance in our own modern literature of a poet who was a definite teacher. But there are, of course, many similar instances. Byron had just as definite an influence over the minds of his contemporaries; he was an actual leader, if not of thought, at least of sentiment, and

[1] Written in 1878.

the Byronic tendency was plainly visible both in literature and in practice. And it is not only true of the beginning of this century, but in most periods poets have been leaders and teachers, with a definite "gospel," as Mr. Carlyle would call it, not so systematic, but quite as influential, as schemes of philosophy or morality. Of course there are many exceptions; there are many dramatic or purely artistic poets whose teaching is only indirect and vague; but, on the whole, it is not difficult to estimate the tendencies of the poetry of any period, inasmuch as those tendencies have been definite and patent. What a poet teaches is not to be found in his longer or more didactic poems only, for there it often misses its effect; it is generally more powerful in the purely lyrical pieces. Insight into Wordsworth's view of nature has been given with greater vividness by *Tintern Abbey*, or by *Three years she grew in sun and shower*, than by the *Excursion*. The essential requisite is that the poet himself shall be so informed by some master truth that hardly an utterance of his shall fail to give some expression to it, and his purest poetry will convey it most fully.

Such being one, and surely the highest, of the poet's functions, we have to ask whether it is fulfilled by any of our contemporary poets. We feel that we must answer this question mainly in the negative. We have imitators of Mr. Tennyson, as he has informed us; echoes of Mr. Swinburne are everywhere audible; Mr. Browning's monologues have given rise to many uncouth travesties; but such imitations of popular writers do not imply that these poets have founded schools of thought, or that any one forms his opinions

or controls his actions in accordance with their guidance. No doubt among our contemporary poets we can find those who can give expression to deep or lofty thoughts, but is there one whom we can call an original creator, one who can create an ideal, and by the power of his imagination or the universality of his expression can compel the minds of men to follow him in striving after it? The leaders who have really guided thought during our epoch have been, in England, great prose writers on morals or art, such as Mr. Carlyle or Mr. Ruskin, or great scientific thinkers, like Mr. Darwin; we do not find a poet among the "kings of modern thought."

The question then arises, if, in our day, contemporary poetry does not lead the mind of the age, what function does it actually fulfil? The answer, in our judgment, is not far to seek; and we reply that it acts not so much as a guide, but as a reflection of contemporary tendencies. This is not the highest function of the poet, but still it is a high calling, and one which, as regards the present age, so singularly incoherent and confused, so full of vague and inarticulate movements, is no light task. And as a matter of fact, this summing up and expression of these otherwise unexpressed strivings and tendencies is the very office which one of their number calls upon poets to fulfil:

> Come, Poet, come!
> A thousand labourers ply their task,
> And what it tends to scarcely ask,
> And trembling thinkers on the brink
> Shiver, and know not how to think:
> To tell the purport of their pain,
> And what our silly joys contain;

In lasting lineaments pourtray
The substance of our shadowy day;
Our real and inner deeds rehearse,
And make our meaning clear in verse:
Come, Poet, come! for but in vain
We do the work or feel the pain,
And gather up the seeming gain,
Unless before the end thou come
To take, ere they are lost, their sum.[1]

This incoherence of modern thought is, perhaps, one of the reasons why our poetry is its reflection and not its guide. For a poet to lead the thought of any period it is necessary that the minds of men should be predisposed to go in certain definite directions, that the paths of possible progress should be broad and well marked, that there should be a store of energy ready to be directed with overwhelming force into some one of these paths. To be a leader a poet must himself feel the overmastering impulse by which he shall compel men to follow him. If there be no such impulse how can he lead? If the paths do not lie broad and clear before him, but confused and faint, and too numerous to be rightly discerned, the sensitive mind will turn from them, and its poetry will be no guide, but a mere echo of the hesitation and bewilderment of those who doubt whither to advance. Such an echo is the poetry of our age. If there be one characteristic common to most of our leading poets, it is that of doubt, hesitation, questioning of all things. Though Blake wrote,

If the sun and moon should doubt,
They'd immediately go out—

a thought which, in spite of its quaintness, expresses

[1] Clough, *Poems*, p. 471.

a great truth, yet this age has proved that poetry does not require such unhesitating certainty for its work, and a genuine music has been brought out of doubt and vagueness of belief.

We propose to examine the main characteristics of two of the poets of the day, in order to discover the peculiarity in their mode of echoing the confused murmurs of contemporary voices, and especially their treatment of the deeper questions which agitate modern literature. The two poets whom we shall discuss are not our leading poets, but we have selected them partly because they represent a certain large and important section, though only a section, of University thought and culture, and partly because of their position in regard to religion and faith.

Mr. Arnold is so keenly alive to the vagueness and confusion of modern thought,

> The hopeless tangle of our age,

and the difficulty of obtaining a clear answer to the problems that haunt us, that we may almost say that his perception of this is the secret of his charm as a poet. He knows that the poet's work differs from the musician's and the artist's chiefly by reason of its complexity. In the *Epilogue to Lessing's* "*Laocöon*," he discusses the cause of the rarity of perfection in poetry compared to music or painting, and finds it in the fact that while painters have only to show one aspect,

> A moment's life of things that live,

and musicians need only

> The feeling of the moment know

and give it utterance, the poet has to mirror life's movement—

> The thread which binds it all in one,
> And not its separate parts alone.

And as a poet, scanning life in order to discover this thread, he feels himself hopelessly baffled by the complexity of the modern world. Once he thinks

> The stream of life's majestic whole

flowed unbroken in one deep channel ; now it is parted and scattered and wasted, and the poet's efforts to explore its course are mere "misery and distress."

Mr. Arnold's view, then, of the world is the view of one who feels himself in the turmoil and confusion of a crowd, who is unable to escape from it altogether, but is determined, as far as in him lies, to counteract the wasting and dispersion of his soul's powers. What he longs for is

> One mighty wave of thought and joy
> Lifting mankind amain.

But this he knows is not to be felt yet in the present ; he looks for it to come in the future. In the present we see only

> Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,
> Float on a rolling sea.
> Upon them ply the race of man
> All they before endeavoured ;
> They come and go, they work and plan,
> And know not they are severed.

Till the reunion, the consolidation of the new world out of the fragments of the old, man must endure. That is the great secret of Mr. Arnold's teaching—

endurance. This teaching seems to him necessary because of the hopeless sadness of the age; there is no tone of hope or buoyancy in his finest poems. The world is sad, and the saddest thing is that so few see the sadness of it:

> Ye slumber in your silent grave!
> The world, which for an idle day
> Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
> Long since hath flung her weeds away.
> The eternal trifler breaks your spell;
> But we—we learnt your lore too well!
>
> Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
> More fortunate, alas! than we,
> Which without hardness will be sage,
> And gay without frivolity.
> Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
> But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Endurance being our duty, we ask, how can man attain to it? It is in Mr. Arnold's answer to this that we perceive the connection between his prose and his poetry.

Few things are more remarkable at first sight than the great difference between Mr. Arnold in prose and Mr. Arnold in poetry. His poems are grave, or rather mournful; they have no irreverence, none of what some call "delicate banter," and others flippancy, no levity in the presence of great problems, and scarcely any bitterness: his prose, as we all know, is the very reverse. We prefer to think that his poetry expresses his mind more truly than his prose, and that we may estimate his tone of thought better by the *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse* than by *Friendship's Garland* or *Literature ana Dogma.*

But on more careful inspection one sees that the difference is little more than one of form, though in the case of so genuine an artist difference of form involves more than a mere superficial variation of expression. Still, one who has patience to penetrate beyond the form of his writings can see that the answer given, whether in prose or in poetry, to the great questions which he raises, is substantially the same.

Mr. Arnold is known as the preacher of culture; of the duty, under all circumstances, of self-improvement; not with a view to worldly advancement, not as machinery, but as an end in itself. Our duty in life is to aim at perfecting our nature on all its sides, securing for ourselves "spontaneity of consciousness," so that above all things we should avoid becoming fixed and immovable in any of our notions or habits. About these we must let "a stream of fresh thought play freely," lest we incur that "failure" which, to quote an extreme votary of culture, "is to form habits." Now whether Mr. Arnold's teaching be true or not we do not now attempt to decide; we wish only to point out that it is the teaching of his poetry as well as of his prose, though under a very different form. Whether culture be our duty or not, it is obviously a work that, at least primarily, concerns ourselves; a religion of culture has a tendency to become self-centred. And it is precisely this attribute of self-absorption that we find in Mr. Arnold's poetry. He is possessed with a feeling of the sadness, the vagueness, and incompleteness of our life as it is, and the only thing that we can do now is to endure, and endurance is only possible by self-dependence:

> And with joy the stars perform their shining,
> And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;
> For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
> All the fever of some differing soul.
>
> Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
> In what state God's other works may be,
> In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
> These attain the mighty life you see.

With this conviction the whole problem of life becomes to the poet not any external truth, not any life or love without him, but the effort to "possess his soul." When, in a very beautiful poem, he would find some power in our life to correspond to the "Palladium" which invisibly preserved Troy, he shows it to be the soul:

> Still doth the soul, from its lone fastness high,
> Upon our life a ruling effluence send;
> And when it fails, fight as we will, we die,
> And while it lasts, we cannot wholly end.

This is the remedy for all that we suffer, so far as there is a remedy at all. This formula, for so we may almost call it, Mr. Arnold would apply to all the conditions of our life. And we must notice how it enters into every part of his emotional or intellectual being. It colours his view of human love, of philanthropy, of the world's progress, of religion.

Self-absorption is dominant in his treatment of human love. The series of poems entitled *Switzerland*, which for the union of fine thought and delicate expression is almost unrivalled even among Mr. Arnold's writings, is the record of the struggle between the fascination of love and the soul which shrinks from love because it would be self-contained. The final separation which gains for the soul its bitter victory

over the love that would have drawn it out of itself is justified by the afterthought that isolation is not only a duty but a necessity ordained by God. The justification is a deep though partial truth, and is expressed in almost perfect language :

> Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
> With echoing straits between us thrown,
> Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
> We mortal millions live *alone.*
> The islands feel the enclasping flow,
> And then their endless bounds they know.

But does it not leave the impression that to the poet the soul's instinctive longing for solitude was the first feeling, and the discovery that

> A God, a God their severance ruled

was the result, not the cause, of that feeling ?

The proud eminence of the soul in its solitude can be rudely disturbed by the passion of human love, but both in *Switzerland* and in *Faded Leaves* the effort is not so much to quell the disturbance by giving a free course to the passion and resting upon an unselfish love, as to forget, to efface the passion, and to preserve to the soul its calmness and self-possession. And there is singularly little about love in these poems. It would seem as if the very mention of a feeling which is essentially unselfish, at least in its first impulse, is foreign to the poet's purpose. Even when he appears to feel the influence of another soul close to his, as in *The Buried Life*, where he describes beautifully the peace of love,

> When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
> When, jaded with the rush and glare
> Of the interminable hours,

Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed,

what is to him the fruit of this, the gain of love? Still self-knowledge and self-possession:

The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean we say, and what we would, we know.

Equally self-absorbed is Mr. Arnold when we might expect the "enthusiasm of humanity" to be a reality to him. It must be owned that very little of this feeling is to be found here. There is at times a fine vision of the progress of mankind, the ultimate goal of perfection to which even now we are tending; but there is no enthusiasm in the tone, it is not to him an inspiring or a joyous theme. We must notice that Mr. Arnold is not a pessimist in the ordinary sense; he believes in progress, and, as we saw in *Obermann Once More*, he represents the new world as being even now formed from the fragments of the old. But this does not relieve his melancholy. It is belief, but not hope. What shall be in the future is not for him to share, for he is one of the past, and it is therefore no cause for rejoicing. He can endure present ills, not because he knows that they will end, but because nature and nature's works

Seem to bear rather than rejoice.

And if we would learn from nature, we must not look onward so much as inward, and thus

Yearn to the greatness of nature,
Rally the good in the depths of thyself.

The hope of a glorious future for the world gives

him no joy, because he feels so strongly the beauty and the charm of the past. He has not yet been caught up in the whirlwind of progress; he does not yet feel the glow of the rising sun, though he has an intellectual conviction that it will rise; and he is haunted by the recollection of what was, and cannot bear to see the world preparing to cast off the old emotions and faiths. Some of the most beautiful lines he ever wrote describe the calm after the "epoch" has ended, before the new world breaks in with its hurry and rushing successes. These he compares to the Bacchanals breaking in upon the calm of the evening, and, called upon to admire the "bright new age," he can only answer:

> Ah, so the silence was!
> So was the hush.

He feels himself neither of the new nor of the old, and in the *Grande Chartreuse* he does not wish to share their faith with "these, last of the people who believe," but only to shed his tears with them.

> Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
> The other powerless to be born,
> With nowhere yet to rest my head,
> Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
> Their faith, my tears, the world deride;
> I come to shed them at their side.

He cannot throw himself forward into the brilliant future, nor can he feel himself at one with the past; his isolation is complete, he cannot find anything outside himself.

It is hardly necessary to ask whether Mr. Arnold's view of religion affords him a remedy for the sadness which he feels, or whether, here also, his prevailing

self-absorption does not pursue him. For we know, from other sources, to what a thin abstraction he has reduced the object of religion ; and even if the " eternal that makes for righteousness " be " not ourselves," yet it is not likely that so impalpable an object could draw out of itself a soul that resists the fascination of love and the contagious ardour of human progress. But we shall find that even *Literature and Dogma* is in advance of many of his poems in asserting the existing of something external to us, which we ought to worship.

The prevailing uncertainty and hesitation in religious belief affect him with sorrow ; he looks back to the faith which " vigorous teachers " forced him to resign, and mourns that he can no longer share it. But his sorrow arises from a different cause from that which makes many an earnest sceptic lament the clouds of doubt which darken heaven for him : to Mr. Arnold unbelief is sorrowful, not because it darkens the vision of God within us, and covers Truth with a cloud, but because it unfits the soul for action, or indeed for contemplation, because it makes us " fluctuate idly without term or scope." In *The Scholar Gipsy* he describes the paralysis of faith, as it might be called ; and there is no word of that which faith reveals, and doubt hides from our eyes :

> . . . . . we,
> Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
> Who never deeply felt, nor clearly will'd,
> Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
> Whose vague resolves never have been fulfill'd,
> For whom each year we see
> Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new ;
> Who hesitate and falter life away,
> And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day.

These verses express well Mr. Arnold's complaint against the tendencies of our age. The vague rebuke of unbelief in the first line is diverted into a wail over the shattering effect of doubt on our own thoughts and actions; of all the charges brought against mankind in the stanza, we imagine Mr. Arnold lays most stress on the first, that "we never deeply felt"; but none of them concern any one but ourselves, and there is no reference to a Being beyond us, nor even to the "white Star of Truth," which elsewhere he mentions.

But Mr. Arnold's chief statement of his philosophy of religion is in the fine poem entitled *Obermann Once More*, in which he describes the weariness and satiety of the Pagan world, the life-giving influence of Christianity poured upon it, and then the gradual waning of the faith which had given the life, and the hope of the new faith which is even now replacing it. But though here Mr. Arnold touches most closely upon the life of Christ and the religion He founded, it is startling to find how little is said about Him, how much about our belief, and the feelings it inspired. He longs for religion, not because that in which religion trusts is true, but because religion is trust. He yearns for the ages of faith, because in them his "ravished spirit" would also have been "caught away," and

> No thoughts that to the world belong
> Had stood against the wave
> Of love which set so deep and strong
> From Christ's then open grave.

The life of Christ is forgotten or passed over, not

because Mr. Arnold does not believe in it, because we know that in a certain sense he does, but because to him the importance of religion lies not in its external reality, but its sensible effect on the soul. So, a few stanzas later, we find the fact and our belief in the fact inextricably confused :

> And centuries came, and ran their course,
> And unspent all that time
> Still, still went forth that Child's dear force,
> And still was at its prime.
>
> Ay, ages long endured His span
> Of life, 'tis true received,
> That gracious Child, that thorn-crowned Man!
> He lived while we believed.
>
> While we believed, on earth He went,
> And open stood His grave;
> Men called from chamber, church, and tent,
> And Christ was by to save.

Here, then, the highest faculty of man, the divinest thing in him, is employed in casting shadows upon the ground, and falling down and worshipping them. The inspiration and fervour of prayer is justified, not by the fact that there is One to whom we call, whether He will answer us or no, but by our belief that there is such an One. The poet would fain galvanize himself into this belief, but cannot, for

> Now He is dead! Far hence He lies
> In the lorn Syrian town,
> And on His grave, with shining eyes,
> The Syrian stars look down.

What we would specially remark in this poem is not that Mr. Arnold takes little account of Christ's Person, for that is not surprising in one who cannot believe

that Person to be Divine, but that he should long for faith in that very Person, and persuade himself that the whole force of Christianity was this imagined belief in what "the brooding East" had evolved from her own thought. It can only be explained by reference to that self-absorption which we have described as Mr. Arnold's special characteristic. The truth of religion matters not, so long as we can feel the religious emotion; when that is once passed, we must up and make to ourselves new gods which will afford us fresh emotions, and in their turn will pass and die. But the strangest thing is that the poet seems to fancy that this self-absorption, which in him leads to such results, is the teaching of Christ. The discovery of the East, that by which she converted the Western world, in fact, the secret of Christianity, he describes thus:

> "Poor world," she cried, "so deep accurst!
> That runn'st from pole to pole
> To seek a draught to slake thy thirst—
> Go, seek it in thy soul";

or, as Mr. Arnold elsewhere expresses it, in words which by their very sound might have reminded him how contrary to Christ's real teaching they are:

> Resolve to be thyself! and know, that he
> Who finds himself, loses his misery.

We do not mean to say that Mr. Arnold's religion is uniformly self-centred, for there are many passages which speak of a "way divine," of an "unseen Power whose eye For ever doth accompany mankind," of a "Friend of man"; but habitual reference to such a Power is not the characteristic of his poetry. And

even when he does dwell upon it it is more than doubtful whether his Pantheistic tendencies do not make him regard this Power as merely the sum of the individual souls of mankind:

> . . . . . we
> Myriads who live, who have lived
> What are we all, but a mood,
> A single mood, of the life
> Of the Being in whom we exist,
> Who alone is all things in one?

We may be wronging Mr. Arnold in this; but whether Pantheism or no, there are several passages in his poems which imply the loss of personality in death, and the re-absorption of soul into the one Spirit. Yet at other times, notably in the lines to his father's memory, the contrary is suggested.

We have quoted, perhaps, to excess from Mr. Arnold's poems. But the thoughts which we have attempted to analyze cannot be better expressed than in Mr. Arnold's own language. There is a vagueness about the matter, and a pellucid clearness about the form of these poems that render it almost necessary to employ little but the poet's own words in presenting his thought. The matter is the matter, cloudy, varying, and intangible, of nineteenth-century speculation: the form is Greek in its exquisite lucidity and clearness. In reading these poems we are continually met by passages in which no word is superfluous, no phrase is jarring, but that which has to be expressed is expressed once for all. Such a stanza as—

> But each day brings its petty dust
> Our soon-choked souls to fill,
> And we forget because we must,
> And not because we will—

takes us back from the age of word-painting and novel combinations in language and rhythm, of superabundant epithets and darkened meaning, to the age of Pope, or of Gray, when language was studied and yet clear, artificial and yet simple. Not Mr. Tennyson's richness of detail, not Mr. Browning's rugged power, not Mr. Swinburne's astonishing volume of words can afford to the jaded minds of modern readers the exquisite pleasure which is given by Mr. Arnold's self-restrained purity of language. And if, to correspond to this, there is not the "sad lucidity of soul" which he so much desires, and asserts that "fate" has given to the poet, we may ascribe the want in great measure to the "hopeless tangle of our age," though partly, no doubt, it is due to the vague and unsatisfactory character of the self-possession to which he strives to attain.

We would contrast with Mr. Arnold's tone of thought, with his hopes, his sympathies, and his beliefs, not one of the more definitely Christian poets such as Mr. Tennyson or Mr. Browning, nor one whose irreligion is as definite, such as Mr. Swinburne; but one whom Mr. Arnold would, we suppose, claim as a sympathiser in thought, and who was, indeed, much in the same perplexity and doubt, his friend, Arthur Hugh Clough.

He was one of those whose whole life was coloured by the impressions received at Oxford during the stirring years 1837–42. Not one whose faith was raised and fortified by the discussions and the personal influences of the time, but one who, as he himself expressed it, was "like a straw drawn up the draught of a chimney" and afterwards left floating in the air without much of definite guidance or impulse. On

first reading Clough's poems we seem to be in an atmosphere of doubt and of little else. Two of his longer poems are entirely occupied with the vacillations of mind which beset those who are starting on life's journey, and can see little before them but an uncertain road and a lowering sky. To one of these he has prefixed the motto "Il doutait de tout, même de l'amour," while the name of the other, *Dipsychus*, expresses the state of division and wavering which seems to be the lot of "feeble and restless youths born to inglorious days." And the poet's characteristic humour, which is hardly absent from any of his poems, is not exactly a straightforward perception and enjoyment of the incongruities of life, with a consciousness all the while of the preponderating serious realities, but an irony, benevolent and natural, yet at times almost inscrutable, which makes the two sides of life seem inextricably confused. Most of his poems are concerned with the uprooting of old opinions, and share to the full the uncertainty that has invaded all provinces of thought; and his humorous irony tends to increase the appearance of utter confusion in which the world is lying. This causes the difficulty of really getting to the root of his meaning; he is not essentially dramatic, like Mr. Browning, for he seldom hides himself behind the mask of another character; but the genial irony of his humour eludes at times any firm apprehension. Read such poems as the *Amours de Voyage*, and especially the section beginning—

> Juxtaposition, in fine; and what is juxtaposition?

or the song of the spirit in *Dipsychus*—

> There is no God, the wicked saith—

or the verses headed, *Wen Gott betrügt, ist wohl betrogen*, and the difficulty of disentangling the lines, so to speak, of Clough's thought will be evident. The humour is apparent on the surface, but it is not so easy to discover how deep it goes.

Clough, then, seems to be essentially the poet of doubt; more so, at first sight, than Mr. Arnold himself. It pervades his poems, and we do not find that, like Mr. Arnold, he seeks a refuge in the calm strength and certainty of Nature, there to find the endurance so sorely needed; but he rather regards Nature as a background to the mixed and confused drama of human life, which it cannot explain nor greatly relieve. His poems are mostly of purely human interest; even those which are speculative derive their impulse from the bearing of speculation on life and duty; and to fly from mankind to seek a higher teaching or a calmer security in Nature would be foreign to Clough's instincts. Nature, indeed, is to him, as to Shakspeare or Chaucer (with whom Mr. Hutton has well compared him) an unfailing source of delight, but it is the childlike, unreflecting delight of an earlier period, something of the same kind of feeling as that which he describes in the *Piper* of the reading-party, who

> Went, in his life and the sunshine rejoicing, to Nuneham and Godstowe;
> What were the claims of degree to those of life and the sunshine?

Life and the sunshine pervade Clough's poems, but he finds no deep lessons in the external beauty that he describes so well, nor does he dwell on Nature for its own sake, but rather as the setting and

accompaniment of human action. He can, with genuine truth, feel that

> Life is beautiful, Eustace, entrancing, enchanting to look at;
> As are the streets of a city we pace while the carriage is changing,
> As a chamber filled in with harmonious exquisite pictures.

But it is human life that he means, and the thought is inspired by what he sees in the streets of Rome, not in the solitudes of Nature. Still, the very unself-consciousness of his love of Nature makes the feeling all the healthier and happier; there is much of the breeziness of a Scotch moor, or of the open sea, in his poems. It is a strong contrast after Mr. Arnold's cool English scenery, the river bank with its lapping wavelets and the trailing wild-flowers washed by the waters, to come upon Clough's glimpses of the burns descending to the "great still sea," and to feel the keen air of the salt breezes. In his two finest lyrics the chief image is taken from the sea, in the boundless expanse of which he seems to get a special inspiration, while his verse often reminds one of the freedom and motion of the waves. But we do not turn to Clough for an insight into the hidden meanings of Nature, nor for a portrayal of the calm and easily overlooked beauties of the world, as we turn to Wordsworth or to Mr. Arnold. What, then, is the special interest of Clough as a poet?

We have said that he seems to be the poet of doubt, and in this he apparently resembles Mr. Arnold. But it is not only in their view of Nature that the two Oxford poets differ; it is impossible to read them without being struck by the essentially different way in which the same intellectual and spiritual facts

come before them. And this is especially noticeable in regard to the absorbing question of the certainty of religious truth. Mr. Arnold, as we have seen, is chiefly interested in it as affecting his own consciousness, and regrets the old faiths, and has no very joyous expectation of the future, because he is self-centred. With Clough, all this is changed. There is no restless longing for a rest, which is only attainable by means of a sort of stoical endurance, but a strong, buoyant, and somewhat proud confidence in a final truth, and a determination to abide its appearance. Mr. Arnold and Clough are both waiting for what the future shall bring forth; but, unlike the former, Clough waits for it in cheerful hope, not without sympathy for the past, but convinced that the ultimate manifestation will be vouchsafed to man in the future. Thus the different characteristics of the two poets are best illustrated by the differing modes in which they treat an almost identical subject. Both have written short poems on the subject of the final victory of good over evil, light over darkness; but the whole tone is entirely distinct. With Mr. Arnold the central idea is that of the individual soldier baffled and at last overcome in the struggle, and falling with a sort of sullen confidence in the final victory, which, however, seems to afford but little consolation in the prospect:

> Creep into thy narrow bed,
> Creep, and let no more be said.
> Vain thy onset! all stands fast!
> Thou thyself must break at last.
>
> Let the long contention cease!
> Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
> Let them have it how they will!
> Thou art tired; best be still.

They out-talked thee, hissed thee, tore thee?
Better men fared thus before thee!
Fired their ringing shot and passed,
Hotly charged—and broke at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

In Clough's poem the individual, far from being the centre, is depicted as the only hindrance to the success of the whole cause; the strife is conceived as almost ended already, and the despondent fighter is rebuked:

Say not, the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main,

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

Nothing can be finer than the two images by which he expresses the character of the struggle; the third stanza brings before us at once the whole scene of an incoming tide, with that peculiar sense of the vastness and openness of the sea which distinguishes

Clough. The contrast of the whole with the bitter and sarcastic resignation of Mr. Arnold's poem; the different conceptions of the struggle itself; in the one a confused, smoke-enshrouded contest, but in the open field, in the other desperate charges against strongly held forts; the buoyant hope of victory in the one, and the careless, hardly mentioned belief in it in the other; all these points afford us some insight into the very distinct characteristics of the two sceptical poets. The difference goes beyond the mere superficial treatment of a subject in a few stanzas; it pervades all their poems. And the fundamental distinction that underlies this superficial unlikeness will, we think, be found to be that while it is doubtful whether Mr. Arnold really holds to or is possessed by the idea of anything external to himself, in Clough's poems numberless passages express not only his unshaken trust in God, but the great influence which his trust has on all his nature, upon every thought and emotion. And this is the more remarkable because he cannot define Him or even conceive Him:

> I will not prate of "thus" and "so,"
> And be profane with "yes" and "no;"
> Enough that in our soul and heart
> Thou, whatsoe'er Thou may'st be, art.

With a feeling which, to him at least, may have seemed to deserve in some measure our Lord's blessing on "those who have not seen, and yet have believed," he can exclaim:

> Be Thou but there—in soul and heart,
> I will not ask to feel Thou art.

It is evident that this attitude in regard to truth is very different from Mr. Arnold's emotional and subjective estimate of it. And it is an attitude which, though it must be called one of suspense, must still be distinguished from scepticism ; for though Clough rejects all definitions of God that have yet been promulgated, he does not take pride in believing in an indefinite Being, whose only attribute is to be unknowable, but his faith is in a God whom hitherto man has been unable rightly to conceive, but who assuredly will reveal Himself to us ; and till He does so the poet can wait in patient confidence :

> No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
> Believe it ne'er—O Man !
> But turn not then to seek again
> What first the ill began ;
> No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith
> God's self-completing plan ;
> Receive it not, but leave it not,
> And wait it out, O Man !

The whole of this poem, the *New Sinai*, is well worth studying, as a development of Clough's religious philosophy. God, he says, has already rebuked idolatry and polytheism by the declaration, "I am One" ; He will hereafter rebuke both the new idolatries and "the atheistic systems dark," which have, like "baby thoughts," dogged the growing man. Our duty is to wait, not in a forced endurance, but in the belief that

> Some lofty part, than which the heart
> Adopt no nobler can,
> Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,
> And thou shalt do, O Man !

The human soul, then, with Clough, is not the

centre of the universe, to which all truth must be brought, the object for which all truth exists, but rather one of the attendants at the shrine of truth, of small interest compared with the paramount claims of some Being external to us, who is Truth and Light. To this fact he clings, and here, diametrically opposed to Mr. Arnold, he finds relief from the confused turmoil of modern doubt and speculation :

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That though I perish, Truth is so ;
> That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
> Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
> I steadier step when I recall
> That, if I slip, Thou dost not fall.

If we bear in mind Clough's conviction that truth is something greater than his soul, and that there may be all the difference in the world between truth and his confused apprehension of it, we shall the better understand his relation to Christianity as a possible form of truth. Though he cannot accept the historical facts of the Gospel, yet he is in no hurry to turn away and seek for a new religion. He is earnest in pleading for a humbler attitude of mind, and his complaint against the world is not that its scepticism has perturbed his soul's calm, but that in its hurry and carelessness it may have passed by some essential truth, and therefore he adjures his brother-men to pause :

> The souls of now two thousand years
> Have laid up here their toils and fears,
> And all the earnings of their pain—
> Ah, yet consider it again.

But though Clough's religious attitude is, at first

sight, one of intellectual suspense, yet he does not hold truth to be perceptible to the intellect alone, or, at least, he is inclined to follow without reluctance the leadings of the emotions, even where the head cannot justify the conclusions of the heart. So in the wonderfully terse and thoughtful lines headed *Through a glass darkly*, after suggesting as an alternative, which we know, from his whole tone of mind, he would have rejected with disdain, that we may

> for assurance' sake,
> Some arbitrary judgment take,
> And wilfully pronounce it clear,
> For this or that 'tis we are here,

he declares that the hope which is given to us constrains in a manner our intellect:

> Ah yet, when all is thought and said,
> The heart still overrules the head;
> Still what we hope we must believe,
> And what is given us receive;
>
> Must still believe, for still we hope
> That in a world of larger scope,
> What here is faithfully begun
> Will be completed, not undone.
>
> My child, we still must think, when we
> That ampler life together see,
> Some true result will yet appear
> Of what we are, together, here.

The close of these verses leads us to a further result of Clough's firm trust in some external reality—namely, his longing for "faithful" work upon earth, his belief that genuine labour in the cause of good will have its fruit, either here or elsewhere; and if not, why, still it is work, and action is our duty.

Even his hesitating heroes, who cannot for themselves decide on any course of action, can see the beauty of definite work, and he pronounces his decision for deeds done in behalf of something not ourselves, rather than for self-culture in words which he puts in the mouth of Dipsychus :

> Ah, not for profit, not for fame,
> And not for pleasure's giddy dream,
> And not for piping empty reeds,
> And not for colouring idle dust;
> If live we positively must,
> God's name be blest for noble deeds.

This, too, is the moral of the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* : that the beauty of life comes from its reality, that is, from the reality of the work which we can do on earth. But this is held without attacking culture in the one-sided way which is so common. What he rejects is the false culture which proceeds on the assumption that the object of life is to perfect oneself without regard to the work which has to be done. Some are meant for beauty, others for " subduing the earth and their spirit," and both should do their work. In spite of the longing for simplicity of life, in spite of the superficial flavour of Rousseau in this poem, it is obvious that Clough is far from rejecting either education or civilization. The beauty of Elspie's nature could only be really seen by one who, like Philip, had " the knowledge of self, and wisely instructed feeling." The very form of the poem, the buoyant refinement which the irregular hexameters suggest, the free Scotch life with the accompaniment of academic study and speculation, combine to give us the impression of a mind subtle yet curiously simple,

vigorous, though apparently distracted by speculative hesitation. And though the abundant humour of the poem makes it not easy to be sure how far Clough was speaking his own opinions through the mouths of his *dramatis personæ*, yet both in this and in his other two long poems, *Dipsychus* and *Amours de Voyage*, we can hardly doubt that the poet has himself experienced the difficulties and questionings which he depicts. And if this be so it is remarkable how Clough, through all this wavering and cloudiness, never really looses his stand on the firm earth. In most of his speculative poems he brings us back at the close to the solid reality of life and duty, which in the earlier part he has been refining away. He does not solve the problems, but he is certain that there is a solution; and it matters not much whether he individually has the solution or not:

> . . . And as limited beings
> Scarcely can hope to attain upon earth to an Actual Abstract,
> Leaving to God contemplation, to His hands knowledge confiding,
> Sure that in us if it perish, in Him it abideth and dies not,
> Let us in His sight accomplish our petty particular doings.

So, confident of this, he can afford to lose himself, as it would seem, in the subtle speculations of his poems, such as those which he well describes in *The Questioning Spirit*, for they end with the thought:

> I know not, I will do my duty.

After apparently sharing fully in the doubts, and sympathising with them, he seldom fails, reverting to his secure standpoint, to rebuke the anxious intellect, and to point to that which, after all said, is unwavering

and abiding. Take, for example, the fine conclusion of *The Stream of Life* :

> O end to which our currents tend,
> Inevitable sea,
> To which we flow, what do we know,
> What shall we guess of thee?
>
> A roar we hear upon thy shore,
> As we our course fulfil;
> Scarce we divine a sun will shine
> And be above us still.

Timid unbelief could hardly be more simply and forcibly rebuked; and yet by the very form of the rebuke, "scarce we divine," the poet shows that he enters into the feeling, that he sympathises with the mind which is confused by the roar of the waves, though at the same time he knows and must point out that the sun is "above us still." For a similar return from the uncertain quagmire of sceptical rationalism to the firm ground of hope and trust, take *Epi-Straussium*, in which he accepts the worst that criticism can do, and then points to the Sun of Truth which still illumines the building, even though it has risen too high for the "pictured panes."

The contrast between Clough and Mr. Arnold can be carried further than the broad differences as to truth and duty. In Mr. Arnold's view of human relations we find the inevitable hopelessness which we believe to be the result of the self-centred attitude of his mind :

> . . . . . we leave behind—
> As, chartered by some unknown Powers,
> We stem across the sea by night—
> The joys which were not for our use designed,
> The friends to whom we had no natural right,
> The homes that were not destined to be ours.

Clough, too, imagines separation of friends; he also represents life as a voyage; but what a difference in the tone! What a buoyant motion in the very measure, as of a great ship leaping forward before a strong wind!—

> But, O blithe breeze! and O great seas,
> Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
> On your wide plain they join again,
> Together lead them home at last.
>
> One port, methought, alike they sought,
> One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
> O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
> At last, at last unite them there!

His thoughts instinctively turn, after he has felt the parting, to the final goal; the tone is that of joyful hope, while Mr. Arnold ends with calm sadness, looking at the present separation and loss, and at nothing beyond.

But perhaps the strongest contrast—and with this we will conclude—is to be found in their respective treatment of love. Mr. Arnold's we have seen; we have seen him resisting it, reluctantly giving way to the fascination, and wrenching his soul back to its loneliness once more. To Clough it is far more of an interest than it is to his fellow-poet. Many of his poems are occupied with the discussion of love in various aspects; and though this subject cannot escape from his subtle mind without undergoing, like all others, a process of refining away, yet generally in the end he reverts to an extremely simple, and not conventional, but natural position, and at times raises the mingled selfishness and self-renunciation of love into a higher sphere by means of a lofty concep-

tion of duty, in the performance of which united lives are of more avail than solitary:

> Yet in the eye of life's all-seeing sun
> We shall behold a something we have done,
> Shall of the work together we have wrought,
> Beyond our aspiration and our thought,
> Some not unworthy issue yet receive;
> For love is fellow-service, I believe.

Here we will conclude our examination of the deeper characteristics of these two poets. We have refrained as much as possible from criticising, in the more technical sense; our office has been to explain and to analyze, not to judge. No doubt, analysis and explanation involve, to a certain extent, criticism also; but we have endeavoured to refrain, when dealing with men who are undoubtedly poets, and therefore have claims on our reverence, from that special function of modern criticism which consists in a fine perception of blemishes rather than beauties, which delights to tell its hearers not what the poet says, but what he does not say. As poetry, we will not criticise these writings; as containing schemes of life, we will only add, in conclusion, that Mr. Arnold stands self-condemned. From the general tone of his poems it is obvious that the sadness pervading the world remains in himself, in spite of the proud self-absorption which he extols as the remedy; and from one pathetic passage it would seem that he has at times a sense of the inconsistency between his professed object and his method, between the Pantheistic absorption into Nature at which he aims, and the studied self-culture and isolation in which he would live:

But mind—but thought—
If these have been the master part of us,
Where will *they* find their parent element?
What will receive *them*, who will call *them* home?
But we shall still be in them, and they in us—
And we shall be the strangers of the world,
And they will be our lords, as they are now;
And keep us prisoners of our consciousness,
And never let us clasp and feel the All
But through their forms, and modes, and stifling veils.
And we shall be unsatisfied as now;
And we shall feel the agony of thirst,
The ineffable longing for the life of life
Baffled for ever; and still thought and mind
Will hurry us with them on their homeless march,
Over the unallied unopening earth,
Over the unrecognising sea.

Self-culture cannot give us a religion, not even the Religion of Pantheism. And when we turn to Clough, we find that it is precisely in proportion as he feels himself able to cling to something external to him that he is hopeful, energetic, and religious. Would it not therefore seem that if these poets be representatives of our age, no teaching can satisfy it but that which will give it something external and objective wherein to rest; that no merely emotional, introspective religion will loose the chains which bind us, for they are the chains of self; but that now, as of old, it is only the Truth that can make us free?

CARLYLE'S LIFE AND WORKS.[1]

A QUARTERLY REVIEW has many disadvantages as compared with publications that are able to comment more speedily upon passing affairs and subjects of fresh interest; but it has this advantage, that it can look at such subjects more dispassionately, and is less likely to fall in with the first hasty conclusions of popular feeling. We are especially conscious of this advantage in dealing with such a theme as the life of Carlyle. For in his case popular feeling has been playing its usual tricks with even more than its usual caprice. For many years before his death it had chosen to set him on a pedestal from which no efforts of his own could dislodge him. He was reverenced as a prophet and consulted as an oracle; the comparative failure of his last great work, the *Life of Frederick*, could no more injure the impression made by his earlier utterances than could the violence and obstinacy of his declarations on slavery impair the admiration felt for his personal character. Popular feeling had apparently determined to make an idol of this man, and popular feeling must have its way, uncontrolled as usual by the restraints of fact or of logic. But the halo which in his lifetime surrounded the person of the great writer was rudely dispersed after his death; and, as everyone knows, his reputation seemed to be fatally injured by his own *Reminiscences*. The usual conventional outcry

[1] Written in 1882.

of the English public arose; the newspapers, whose function it is to guide public opinion whither it wishes to go, swelled the chorus; and the only question was whether Carlyle was the more to blame for writing, or Mr. Froude for publishing, the offending book. Into that dispute we do not propose to enter, except to say that in our opinion Mr. Froude was formally justified in publishing the *Reminiscences* by Carlyle's express consent given "a few weeks before" his "death." As to the manner in which Mr. Froude has discharged his task we shall have something to say later; in the mere act of the publication, we repeat, we hold him to have been within his right.

The outcry has not been diminished by the further revelations contained in Mr. Froude's *History of the First Forty Years of Carlyle's Life*. The reaction which popular feeling invariably goes through has not yet set in, though we may confidently expect it. The two books, on the whole, tally in the impression they give of Carlyle's character, if, that is, in reading the *Reminiscences*, we remember that the writer was an old man bowed down by the weight of a great grief. This has been, we think, to a great extent forgotten by those who joined in the outcry caused by the publication. Still, admitting for the present the substantial accuracy of the representation of Carlyle contained in these books, let us see what we are to say of the clamour which they produced.

Proverbs are always devices for escaping from the trouble of thinking for oneself, and they are very often excuses for refusing to do one's plain duty. Of this kind more especially is the favourite retort of the indolent man of the world to the inconvenient preacher:

"Practice what you preach." "They may be true and they may be very important, but so long as your own example gives me the smallest loophole for escaping from the strictness of your precepts, I need not listen to them." That is the usual meaning of the saying; and we cannot help thinking that it has been strikingly exemplified in the world's treatment of Carlyle. A lofty moralist, a stern and vehement reprover of all that is base and conventional, a persistent despiser of the common littlenesses of life, Carlyle was naturally most unpalatable to the mass of men. His very existence in the midst of English society in the nineteenth century was, as it were, a standing declaration against the principles and practice of a great part of that society. It was with something of alacrity, then, with an odd kind of relief, that in the *Reminiscences* people saw the desired loophole, the opportunity for applying their favourite proverb. The preacher had not practised, or at least it suited us to say so. He was evidently censorious, almost calumnious; he was envious, discontented, selfish; he made much of the small and inevitable troubles of life, in spite of his own repeated exhortations to his readers to face them and go boldly through them; in short, he was a thoroughly disagreeable man, with quite as much of human infirmity as any of his once reverential disciples, and the world may be dispensed from listening to what he had to say, and need adopt none of his very embarrassing principles. Has there not been something, at least, of this unconscious relief in the popular feeling about Carlyle since his death? The moralists we like are very seldom so stern and unbending and unworldly as he was; it was a con-

tinual strain to listen to him, a still greater to attempt to do what he taught, and now that the "broken bow" has succeeded in "starting aside," there is a certain feeling of contentment and comfort in the escape from the old constrained attitude of mind. So great is this feeling, indeed, that men have hardly noticed that they have founded their sweeping accusation of Carlyle almost entirely on one fault—an obvious fault, it is true, and a serious fault, but scarcely sufficient as the basis of the whole structure of reprobation. The one point no one can overlook in these books is the harsh and contemptuous judgments of his contemporaries, and the very vigorous language in which those judgments are expressed. There are other matters of accusation —his apparently selfish treatment of his wife, his exaggeration of small evils, for example; but these are not so obvious or so important as the perpetual scorn of others so definitely and witheringly pronounced on almost every page of his *Reminiscences* or his journal. The general reader has not been able to overlook this. The one *sine quâ non* of a good man in our time is good-humour; the only virtue we are all prepared to enforce is a sort of easy benevolence that includes everybody in a general verdict of unmeaning praise. We are terribly afraid of speaking out, especially of speaking out the truth, when it is likely to injure anyone's feelings. Carlyle is describing a class, or rather a whole generation, in at least the latter half of his portrait of the Ettrick Shepherd: "his intellect seems of the weakest; his morality also limits itself to the precept 'Be not angry'" (*Life*, ii. 234). No wonder, then, that on looking into the private thoughts of a man whose grand characteristic was clearness of insight,

and whose chief failing was exaggeration of expression, we should be startled to find men of whom we have usually heard nothing but slightly insipid good described with remorseless accuracy and unsparing vigour, standing out with all their faults, whether of appearance, manner, or character, in the fierce light of Carlyle's deep-piercing eyes. It is startling, and we would not be thought to underrate the unpleasantness of it; nor do we wish by any means to praise Carlyle for his habit of derogatory speech. We shall have more to say of this later; at present we would only point out that such a shock is not always an unmixed evil. It may awaken us to the fact that the principle *de mortuis et vivis nil nisi bonum* is not always good and sufficient for a practical rule of life; that truth, in however strange and harsh a form, is at times a necessary element in history, even in contemporary history; and that the shrinking from the man who speaks out may be as much a sign of moral cowardice as of Christian charity. Carlyle's life has other lessons to teach than the mere fact that he was, as Mr. Froude is never tired of reminding us, "gey ill to live wi'"; and it is surely a pity that for the present this impression should have overpowered all others in the popular mind. For on the whole, as we hope to be able to show, it was a noble life; disfigured, like many other noble lives, by weaknesses and faults, but still noble and full of much that is most lacking in men of our time.

First, however, we must say something of the way in which Mr. Froude has done his work. We must own to being very greatly disappointed with the merely literary execution of it. Even the grammer is at times

bad, and shows signs of slovenly haste in the preparation of the book, and this is confirmed by the perpetual and wearisome repetitions of the same thoughts and phrases. Mr. Froude has not taken the trouble to condense what he has to say ; his various descriptions of Carlyle's character are merely so many attempts to say the same thing, and instead of selecting the best attempt, and giving us that alone, he presents us with all, good, bad, and indifferent. One has the feeling of never gaining ground, and the last pages of the book seem to be occupied with the same points as were the first. Still worse than this is the confused arrangement, and the repetition of events in Carlyle's life, first in Mr. Froude's own language, and then in extracts from the *Reminiscences*. A flagrant instance of this occurs on pp. 16 and 17 of vol. i., where within two pages the same passage of some five lines in length is repeated. It would have been better in every way had Mr. Froude used the *Reminiscences* as materials for the *Life*, instead of confusing our minds with two books covering very much the same ground, of which the first reappears at intervals in the second in a most perplexing manner. He might thus, by publishing only selections from the *Reminiscences*, have avoided the offence and pain which the hasty and unrestricted publication gave to so many.

But these are only literary faults. What we dislike still more in Mr. Froude's book is the tone and temper in which it is written. This is of course a matter of personal impression, and others may fail to perceive what we mean ; but to us there is something extremely repulsive in the way in which Mr. Froude portrays his friend, exaggerating, as he himself almost owns (ii. 470),

the characteristic faults, repeating, with a cold disdain for the feelings of others, the scathing comments made by Carlyle in private on his acquaintances, and vouchsafing no word of apology or of regret, in spite of the outcry caused by the publication of the *Reminiscences*. If we do not blame Carlyle for his harsh judgments, we do blame Mr. Froude for publishing them; or at least, if he thought it his duty to publish them, we blame him for the way in which he has done it. He might in many cases have left names blank: he has seldom done this; and in two cases at least where he has tried to prevent identification, he has either wilfully or with surprising clumsiness betrayed the secret by the immediate context.[1] But we cannot help thinking that Mr. Froude takes a sort of contemptuous pleasure in displaying and emphasizing the outbursts of passion to which Carlyle was undoubtedly subject. He reminds us of a showman whose pride it is to stir up the lions and make them roar, and who looks at the mingled emotions of the spectator with an unsympathetic and passionless interest that is singularly unattractive. We have reason to believe that the impression of Carlyle given by the *Reminiscences* was, to say the least, one-sided and incorrect; but it is this impression that Mr. Froude sets himself to emphasize and increase in the *Life*. There are indeed passages of great truth and much beauty of tone, in which he gives the counterbalancing facts and points out the great qualities that in reality overpowered the surface faults of his friend; but there can be no doubt that on the whole the general idea we take from reading the *Life* is the same as that given by the *Reminiscences*, which, we

[1] See *Life*, i., pp. 303, 307; ii., pp. 117, 120.

repeat, is exaggerated and partial. If one reads carefully, it is not difficult to see in Mr. Froude's own pages abundant evidence to the contrary; but few people do read carefully, and the result, therefore, of the book is to perpetuate a popular opinion of Carlyle which was generated by the premature and isolated publication of the *Reminiscences*, and ought to have been corrected and mitigated by those who knew him best. But his reputation has been left in the hands of one who, apparently by preference, dwells on the violent weaknesses and intemperate melancholy of the great writer, and who at times even strains his words in order to prove him morose and malevolent. A more unfounded and ill-natured comment, for instance, than that on Carlyle's account of Jeffrey we have seldom read: "Carlyle was evidently trying to think as well as he could about his *great* friend, and was not altogether succeeding."[1] There is literally no truth in this insinuation: the passage is a very favourable, though discriminating, account of a man who differed fundamentally from Carlyle, but whose goodness and brightness Carlyle could see and describe with most ungrudging generosity. "On the whole," he ends, "he is about the *best man* I ever saw." Mr. Froude's comment is a deliberate attempt to keep up the unfavourable impression of Carlyle. Again, the whole story of Carlyle's marriage and relations with his wife is, so far as we can see, exaggerated and darkened by Mr. Froude. We do not wish to say that the marriage was an ideally happy one; but it is impossible to read the letters written by both husband and wife without seeing that there was in these two fine natures a strong foundation of

[1] Vol. ii., p. 127.

enduring love, capable of resisting much more than the sharp words and passionate outbursts to which both were liable. To judge between man and wife is proverbially difficult, and we cannot say that in the rest of the book Mr. Froude has shown that delicacy of taste and perception which alone could qualify him for success in this department of his task.

However, leaving Mr. Froude, let us turn to the life and character of the great writer, as they are revealed to us in his own letters and journals. After all, not much harm has been done. There may have been a mistaken selection of materials ; the letters and extracts may represent too exclusively the darker side of Carlyle's outpourings ; but there is enough in these volumes to show us a singularly rich and powerful character, whose qualities can by no means be summed up in one antithetical phrase, or even fully appreciated by any one mind. We would try to put together the more important traits of this character as they have struck us, keeping before our minds the fact that we are standing, as it were, beneath the object of our contemplation, and can only imperfectly see it. We are too close to it and too much below it to judge quite accurately.

In estimating a man's life there are two things to be considered, his ideal, and his conformity to his ideal. For the first a man is only in part responsible; as for the second, he has only himself to blame if he fails to come up to what he knows to be the right standard of life. Circumstances may indeed hamper and confine a man's action ; but no one has shown more nobly than Carlyle in many passages how the true hero rises supreme and reaches his ideal in spite of circumstances. Carlyle's ideal of what is right was in great part the

natural ideal of a stern, God-fearing Scottish peasant. He was brought up in a life of hardship and toil: so the duty of sound and honest work was among the first impressed upon him. His ancestors, and especially his father and mother, were admirable specimens of the strong believing Calvinists of the North, in whose eyes God's will is the one matter of importance in this world, who are therefore rigid and uncompromising and true to the manifestations of that will that they see in the world of fact. Carlyle was therefore brought up to reverence facts, to cling to the truth in everything, to despise all trifles, and to hate falsehood. The main elements of his ideal of goodness he brought with him into the world. Strength, honesty, industry, reverence, truth, these were his heritage; and we can see that to these he did conform his whole life through. One virtue only, so far as we can judge, came to him later, and his grasp of it was proportionately weak. The Calvinist temper does not seem to have included self-renunciation as a real part of the Christian life. To the will of God, indeed, man must utterly submit himself: so far self-renunciation was recognized; but to deny oneself for others, to remember the brotherhood of man, seems to be no part of the duty of life for those who are taught to think that their one object is the salvation of their own souls. Nevertheless, Carlyle learnt this also, but he learnt it late in life.

Work and truth and reverence are, we should say, the great features of Carlyle's character that stand out in his own unconscious portrait of himself. Mr. Froude says that he believed himself to have "perhaps less capability for literature than for any other occupation," and that part of his discontent arose from his being

debarred from a life of action, and compelled to take to an occupation of mere speaking and writing—of words, not deeds. Still more noble, then, is his determination to carry his principle of good work into every article and every book that he undertook. Few can understand, unless they have known it, the temptation to a man who is writing for his bread to scamp his work, to write thoughtlessly and untruly, to catch the passing fancy instead of speaking only the message that has been entrusted to him. Carlyle was a grand instance of the man who chose the harder part, who, as Mr. Froude well says,

"had imposed conditions upon himself which might make the very keeping himself alive impossible; for his function was sacred to him, and he had laid down as a fixed rule that he would never write merely to please, never for money; that he would never write anything save when specially moved to write by an impulse from within; above all, never to set down a sentence which he did not in his heart believe to be true, and to spare no labour till his work to the last fibre was as good as he could possibly make it."

And however contemptuous he might be of the work of writing, compared with manual labour, yet it was very real work. How many Quarterly Reviewers are there who would prepare themselves for an article by reading "twenty-five octavo volumes" through? Yet Carlyle did this conscientiously for his essay on Diderot.

In all this honest industry and exactness Carlyle was but carrying out the lessons he had learnt from the precepts and, above all, from the example of his father. There are few more touching records in literature than his *Reminiscences of James Carlyle, of Ecclefechan, Mason*;

and in this record perhaps the leading thought is the excellence and soundness of the work that his father accomplished :

" The force that had been lent my father he honourably expended in manful welldoing. A portion of this planet bears beneficent traces of his strong hand and strong head. Nothing that he undertook but he did it faithfully and like a true man. I shall look on the houses he built with a certain proud interest. They stand firm and sound to the heart all over his little district. No one that comes after him will ever say, Here was the finger of a hollow eye-servant. They are little texts for me of the gospel of man's freewill."

Carlyle thus handed on to us what he had received from the generations before him ; and how useful, and indeed necessary, it is for us to learn this lesson of honest work, none knew or have expressed more clearly than he. It is right to remember that the amazing objurgations of bad work which are so frequent in the *Reminiscences* and elsewhere are the expressions of a genuine and deep-seated feeling, though exaggerated, like all Carlyle's feelings, by the great energy of his metaphorical language. And in this point, at least, what he fiercely blamed in others he would never give way to himself: no writing of his is hasty or inaccurate ; and such a work as the first volume of the *French Revolution*, rewritten with no apparent loss of vigour or truth of detail, should be to all later writers what his father's houses were to him, a " text of the gospel of man's freewill."

Carlyle's love of good work was based on a still deeper and nobler instinct in his nature, his steadfast adherence to truth. On this point we shall, we fear,

go against the opinions of many of our readers, of those especially who have joined in the popular outcry against the *Reminiscences*. For leaving aside the habitual exaggeration of language, we believe that for the most part the outcry was caused by the totally unexpected and unprecedented truthfulness of Carlyle's utterances about his contemporaries. Mistakes and misrepresentations have been pointed out in the *Reminiscences*; but in many cases they should be set down to the state of mind in which the greater part of that unhappy book was written, so that, as Mr. Froude testifies, "he was afterwards unconscious what he had done." To take the "wild and whirling words" of such writings, and to generalize from them exclusively, is a striking instance of the tendency in human nature to debase rather than exalt, to think upon the evil that is in men rather than upon "whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." We will not take the *Reminiscences* as Carlyle's typical judgments of the men of his time. But, it will be said, in his private letters and in his journals as we read them in the *Life* we find the same evil-speaking and contemptuous abuse. Now, with some very few exceptions, we should deny this. Carlyle's descriptions of others are, as we have said, exaggerated and harsh in expression; they are coloured by his constitutional melancholy and by the added gloom of dyspepsia, and in some cases they are hopelessly unsympathetic. But, speaking generally, they are true; they are rarely even one-sided, and we should not mistake an unconventional openness of praise as well as blame for unmitigated blame. Where both sides of a man's character are clearly and vigorously portrayed, one is very apt to remember

only the shadows ; but we doubt whether there is in the *Life* any portrait, except one, which is entirely shadow. The exception, a most harmful one for Carlyle's reputation, is, of course, Charles Lamb. Here Carlyle's insight was darkened by his prejudices, and the result is a hopeless misunderstanding and a painful misrepresentation. But this, which has been so dwelt upon, is an isolated case. Look, on the other hand, at his many striking estimates of Jeffrey's very uncongenial character, especially at the well-balanced judgment to which we have already referred ; look at the ungrudging praise of Allan Cunningham, of Leigh Hunt, of Charles Buller, or of John Mill, all of them very different men in opinions and in character from Carlyle, and yet praised and judged with great generosity as well as accuracy. For, we must repeat it, the foundation of all his judgments is truth ; and those for which he has been most blamed will often be found the truest. The portraits are so startling in their piercing veracity and life, the men are "hit off" with such vigour and reality, that the effect upon one who admires them is sometimes that of an unexpected cold bath. It is not often that one whom we have learnt to love and admire in his writings is quite able to maintain his position when we see him in person ; and Carlyle's portraits are singularly lifelike introductions to the persons described. No one surely can doubt that in his two descriptions of Coleridge the man is really put before us as he appeared to an observer, competent, indeed, and appreciative, but not very sympathetic. If Carlyle saw him in that guise, it was better that he should say so than that he should give the world a conventional picture of the great leader of thought. Such a

description explains better than many philosophical discourses the comparative failure of Coleridge's life. But it must be noticed that the other side is given faithfully as far as it was possible for Carlyle to give it. And even the summing up in a letter to his brother is, if the habitual picturesqueness of the language be discounted, not an unfair description: "Coleridge is a mass of richest spices putrefied into a dunghill. I never hear him *tawlk* without feeling ready to worship him, and toss him in a blanket." Again, if one puts together the three allusions to Macaulay, what an admirable account they are, of course from Carlyle's point of view, of the rising man of the day: "Of Macaulay I hear nothing very good—a sophistical, rhetorical, ambitious young man of talent." This is corrected by later impressions: "an emphatic, hottish, really forcible person, but unhappily without divine idea." Lastly, "he has more force and emphasis in him than any other of my British coevals. Wants the root of belief, however. May fail to accomplish much. Let us hope better things." Taking, as we have said, the three remarks together, and remembering the enormous difference between the two men's characters and beliefs, we maintain that in such a description there is an essential truth. Equally true, or at least not greatly exaggerated, must appear to many the sudden flashes of scorn at two of the literary leaders of the day: "Rogers an elegant, politely malignant old lady;" and "Moore . . . a lascivious triviality of great name." Remembering who Carlyle was in comparison with such men as Rogers and Moore, we must own that these scathing words are not far from the truth as to the men themselves

and as to their position in the world. For, in spite of the natural tendency to believe in past generations, it is becoming clear to us that Carlyle came to London at what was in truth almost the low-water mark of this century in literature, as in some other things. Byron and Shelley and Keats were dead, Scott was in his decadence, Wordsworth far off and unregarded by the leaders of criticism. The poverty of poetry was not being redeemed by the learning or the brilliancy of prose writers. With the exception of Hallam, for Macaulay was only beginning his career, it would be difficult to name any historian whose work has lasted or deserved to last. Novelists were represented by Bulwer Lytton, who is still a superstition of the Germans, but to the two notices of whom by Carlyle few Englishmen will now greatly demur : "a dandiacal philosophist ;" and again, "intrinsically a poor creature this Bulwer ; has a bustling whisking agility and restlessness which may support him in a certain degree of significance with some, but which partakes much of the nature of *levity*. Nothing truly notable can come of him." Indeed, very little truly notable has come of the literary world of England at the time that Carlyle came into it, a moody Titan with "*such eyes*."

The unshrinking veracity with which he could speak of his friends. and his constancy to them in spite of great divergence in opinion, are, of course, most signally illustrated in the case of Edward Irving. For to a man like Carlyle, resolutely set against all external manifestations of religious feeling, and utterly contemptuous of nineteenth-century Christianity, it must have been a sore trial to see his first and greatest

friend dragged into the strangest excesses of sectarianism. And, so far as we can see, he never for a moment gave way to Irving or allowed him to claim his sympathy in these things. He seems to have been throughout true to his own convictions ; and the separation between the two would, with men of less nobility, have been complete. For in addition to the difference in religious opinions, there was the private cause of difference alluded to in the *Reminiscences*, and now made clear to us by Mr. Froude. The circumstances of Carlyle's marriage we shall deal with later ; of Irving's share in them we can speak very shortly. There can be no doubt that Irving and Miss Welsh loved each other, and that she would have married him but for the obstacle of his previous engagement. Most loyally and uncomplainingly he seems to have kept to his promise ; and she, full of respect and admiration, but without love, married Carlyle. It was not in human nature for her to remember without bitterness the part that Mrs. Irving had taken in preventing her marriage with Irving ; and we cannot doubt that much of Carlyle's separation from his friend, and his apparently ignorant misrepresentation of Mrs. Irving's character, arose from his wife's recollection of what had passed between her and Irving, and of the way in which they were finally kept apart. But this alienation has left but few traces on his estimate of Irving's character. There are a few bitter passages, but they are invariably redeemed by beautiful words of just praise : and even when criticizing most severely what he could not but think to be Irving's delusions, he did so that " at some future time of crisis and questioning dubiety in Irving's own mind he might remember

the words of a well-affected soul, and they might then be a help to him." Nearly every word he writes about Irving, down to the last notice, one of the most nobly mournful elegies a man ever had, is marked with sincerity and truth, and reminds us of Irving's own saying, "in his last weeks of life": "I should have kept Thomas Carlyle closer to me; his counsel, blame, or praise, was always faithful; and few have such eyes." And we believe that, in the end, the judgment of the world will not be very different from Irving's. Carlyle was exaggerated and gloomy; he had a consciousness of superiority which was unpleasing and arrogant, though not unfounded; he was too much self-absorbed to be able to sympathize with men of different characters; but he was faithful in praise and blame, and he had eyes that have rarely been equalled in their power of insight.

It is this gift of clear sight that makes him so astonishingly accurate in description and tenacious in memory: that is, it was this that gave him the power to be accurate; but it was his moral strength, his steadfast adherence to truth, that made him exercise this power all through his life. His extraordinary descriptive genius seems to arise from his conscientious determination to see things and persons as they really are; and, having once pierced through the mists that conventionality and indolence and indifference usually cast round an object, the image was so clearly impressed upon his mind that no lapse of time seems to have obscured it. The scenes and the people that he had transiently looked upon sixty or seventy years before stand out by a few vigorous descriptive words in the *Reminiscences*, as if they were then and there

before him; it is done in an incidental manner, as if he could not help it, but was obliged to set down the facts that his marvellous memory carried in it. For a few minutes he talked with the officer in charge of the survey on the Lomond Hills; and fifty years later the poor man stands before us as "a saucy-looking, cold official gentleman." The "faded Irish dandy," to whom Carlyle and Irving, in the dim past, gave a breakfast at Annan, is portrayed as "a parboiled insipid agricultural dandy," with "a superfine light green frock, snow-white corduroys; age above fifty, face colourless, crow-footed, feebly conceited." There are hundreds of equally vigorous and seemingly faithful pieces of "instantaneous photography" in the *Reminiscences* and the *Life*; and in reading them we can understand something of Carlyle's eagerness to get at facts, and his impatience of men who had no facts to tell him. This eagerness for fact was not common at that time, as we may see if we recall the contemporary literature; and Carlyle corroborates this impression:

"Not one of that class will tell you a straightforward story, or even a credible one, about any matter under the sun. All must be packed up into epigrammatic contrasts, startling exaggerations, claptraps that will get a plaudit from the galleries. I have heard a hundred anecdotes about William Hazlitt, for example; yet cannot by never so much cross-questioning even form to myself the smallest notion of how it really stood with him."

To a man whose desire was to see and understand rather than to laugh and to feel, the talk of men like Lamb was, no doubt, as he says, "inexpressibly wearisome"; to the Scotch Calvinist, lightness and inaccuracy

and mere "idle tattle" were almost profanation, and, like his father, "what had no meaning in it—above all, what seemed false—he absolutely could and would not hear, but abruptly turned aside from it, or, if that might not suit, with the besom of destruction swept it far away from him."

It is to this resolution to see, to penetrate to the very thing itself, undarkened by tradition, or custom, or prejudice that Carlyle owes much of his originality. The change from one literary epoch to another is brought about by men who become aware that the truths of former innovators have gradually thickened into falsehoods and conventional inaccuracies, and who determine to put them aside and to see once more the facts of life. What Wordsworth had done for the previous generation, Carlyle, in a very different manner, did for his; he recalled it from conventional phraseology and unreal modes of thought to reality and truth. "Carlylese" has itself become a phraseology, and partakes of the nature of cant; but that should not blind us to the truth and veracity which formed the groundwork of his life, and which were due, in great measure, to his training as a Scottish peasant's son.

In the central passage of *Sartor Resartus*, indeed, one might almost say of all his works, Carlyle declares that "always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even the *Shadow of Ourselves*." Few men have better exemplified the truth of this saying than its author; and the consciousness of his own self-absorption was, without doubt, one grand cause of his continued restlessness and melancholy. But it is very necessary to distinguish between self-absorption and selfishness. In act, Carlyle seems to have been a singularly unselfish

man. As Mr. Froude points out, "the savings of his thrift were spent in presents to his father and mother, and in helping to educate his brother." It is not many men who would have endured a struggling life of hard work for several years in order to start a brother in his profession; yet much of Carlyle's early difficulty and hardship was caused by this. He seems never to have shrunk from giving, though he was never rich; and his giving was truly evangelical, in that it was done in secret. We have heard, on good authority, of instances of his thoughtful kindness in little troublesome cares for others, which are often harder than the giving of alms, and which he might have well been excused for disregarding. In the delightful *Journals* of his Quaker friend Caroline Fox we find an instance of his unprompted activity in helping the collier who had tried to sacrifice his own life to save another's. Many more cases could be recorded, but indeed Mr. Froude's *Life* is enough to clear him from the charge of having been in act a selfish man. His splendid devotion to his work, a work done without regard to himself, is itself a monument of unselfishness. It was not merely that he worked for very inadequate rewards, or that he refused to pander to popular taste in order to make money, but that the great bulk of his work is of an impersonal and general nature. For a man of such intense individuality and, as we now see, gnawing self-consciousness, it is wonderful how little of the "shadow of self" there is in his writings. The great revelation of his own spiritual struggles once made in *Sartor Resartus*, he turned to apply for the benefit of the rest of mankind the strength and experience he

had gained. Before these letters and journals were published, one caught indeed a glimpse of the "shadow of self" in occasional phrases in the *Life of Sterling*, but they certainly do not mar the beauty of that finished and living portrait. Yet this was the man whose journal is as complete a revelation of continual self-absorption as any one of those instruments of morbid vivisection that we have ever seen. And it must also be owned that this was the man who manifested the same self-absorption in his utter unconsciousness, rather than disregard, of the feelings and wants of those around him. His character was a strange mixture of selfishness and self-denial: when he thought, he was unselfish; but his impulse was to be wrapped up in himself, and to be deaf and blind to other people. The fault comes out most plainly, as might have been expected, in his journal. It takes the form of looking at everything and everybody from his own point of view; he seems to have had a scornful incapacity for putting himself into the place of others. The result was not only to make him solitary and unhappy in his life, but it also seriously injured his intellectual power. A man begins to learn and to see deeply into the causes of things when he recognizes the infinite diversity of human faculties, and looks at other men to find out not merely, as Carlyle too often did, what use they can be to him, but what they are in themselves. If a man could not tell Carlyle any fact, if he could "add nothing to him," if he represented a different sphere of life, with different interests and different thoughts, he was nothing to him; Carlyle simply rejected him as supererogatory. In his retrospect of life he seems to have dimly perceived this,

and contrasts himself with his wife : "She had a frank welcome to every sort of worth and even kindly singularity in her fellow-creatures, such as I could at no time rival." A greater power of going out of himself and, by a sympathetic imagination, seeing as others saw, and feeling as they felt, would have added some truth to his historical books and much to his prophecies. But he could not welcome "kindly singularities in his fellow-creatures," unless they were like his own, and he could not, therefore, believe in improvement or in progress except on the exact lines which seemed good to himself.

When his own experience was in question, he lost all sense of proportion. His own discomforts and ailments became magnified beyond all measure, partly by his self-absorption, but partly also by his astonishing power of hyperbolical language. In the *Journals* of Caroline Fox, which give almost incidentally a far more vivid and comprehensible picture of Carlyle than we can get from Mr. Froude's descriptions, will be found several admirable reports of his conversation, from which we can, to a great extent, understand its power and its extravagance. Many people, for instance, know the discomfort of railway travelling, but Carlyle was unable to compare himself with others, and his misery seems to stand out as a unique fact in the history of the world. "In that accursed train, with its devilish howls and yells driving one distracted! . . . It is enough for me to reflect on my own misery." It is the same with his dyspepsia; though in this, by the way, Mr. Froude seems to us to do him an injustice. He speaks of Carlyle's "imagined ill-health," and seems to think that if a man is "impervious to

cold" and has a strong constitution, he ought not to mind such a mere ailment as dyspepsia. But is it not just this that makes the peculiar torment of indigestion? A man does not die under it, he does not get better or worse, but it goes on through his whole life, darkening everything, spoiling every pleasure, increasing every burden. This was its effect on Carlyle, and its influence on his writings and on his character can scarcely, perhaps, be overrated. But he speaks as if no one else had ever suffered from dyspepsia and sleeplessness; and he was totally unable to carry out his own reiterated precepts to bear in silence, not, as he says in *Sartor Resartus*, to "pip and whimper and go cowering and trembling." Still, we must remember that this weakness and impatience were but external; they did not affect his work, and no one who knows what dyspepsia is will underrate the splendid perseverance which gave him strength to labour on through it all. For the chief misery of his ailment is that it is not merely pain, but pain which affects the intellect and the feelings alike; in his own vivid words: "every window of your Feeling, even of your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter; a whole Drugshop in your inwards; the fordone soul drowning slowly in quagmires of Disgust." He is a strong and a brave man who perseveres in laborious and unrepaying work through such a state; and we do not know who has a right to cast a stone at him if he did not endure in silence.

No doubt the most serious flaw in Carlyle's character was his disregard for the feelings of those around him, and especially his inability to see how hardly

his mode of life was pressing upon his wife. We do not think Mr. Froude is justified in relying upon such a saying of hers as that which he quotes: "Carlyle has exceeded all that my wildest hopes ever imagined of him—and I am miserable"; for we know from other sources that she was quite as much given to exaggeration in language as he was; and we have the less doubtful evidence of her letters to prove that "I am miserable" by no means accurately represented her married life. It is not a "miserable" wife who can write thus to her husband when absent:

"To be separated from you one week is frightful as a foretaste of what it *might* be, but I will not think of this if I can help it; and after all why should I think of life without you? Is not my being interwoven with yours so close that it can have no separate existence?"

And, in spite of Mr. Froude's strange statement, that "with love his feeling for her had nothing in common but the name," no one can read his letters to her without seeing in them the most genuine love, expressed in many beautiful and playful passages. It is simply a misrepresentation to say, "He thought of a wife as a companion to himself who would make life easier and brighter to him. But this was all"; for this is contradicted even by Mr. Froude's own comment on one of Carlyle's letters to his wife: "The intense affection which he felt for her is visible in every line." We will not quote from his letters to prove what is most clear to the hastiest reader; "every line" is enough to show that there was no lack of real love, on his side from the first, on her side after a very short experience of married life. The fault was not the

absence of love, but his failure to express his love in their daily life, and the self-absorption which prevented him from knowing that she wanted something more than he gave her. As Caroline Fox, with a woman's sympathy, puts it: "He does not pay that attention to little things on which so much of a woman's comfort depends." It was a "grievous fault, and grievously" did he "answer it"; for every page of the *Reminiscences* burns with the fire of unavailing regret for his lifelong selfishness; but it was too late that he learnt that self-renunciation consists not only in submission to the will of God, but in self-denial and care for other people.

But there are on this subject certain facts which should be taken into account in judging Carlyle's conduct as a husband. Mr. Froude points out that his experience was that of a Scottish peasant, accustomed to see his mother and sisters work hard, and it was natural for him to expect the same of his wife. No doubt a man of Carlyle's understanding should have recognized the difference, and above all should have tried to soften the hardships of such a life to his delicately nurtured wife. But, when all is said, there is more excuse for him than for the common run of men whose domestic selfishness is happily hidden under their natural obscurity; though we by no means wish, in urging excuses for Carlyle, to avail ourselves of perhaps the most absurd of Mr. Froude's many shallow generalizations about "men of genius": "The mountain peaks of intellect are no homes for quiet people. Those who are cursed or blessed with lofty gifts and lofty purposes may be gods in their glory or their greatness, but are rarely tolerable as human companions."

Mr. Froude seems to know a good deal about "men of genius," but we cannot accept such a statement on his sole authority. Even if it were true, and many instances contradict it, it would be no excuse for Carlyle or any other ill-tempered "man of genius."

There is another consideration which Mr. Froude refers to, indeed, but only slightly. It is the fact that much of the fault was undoubtedly on Mrs. Carlyle's side. Here, again, we can bring in Miss Fox's testimony to supplement Mr. Froude's hints. He says: "Miss Welsh too, as well as Carlyle, had a fiery temper. When provoked she was as hard as flint, with possibilities of dangerous sparks of fire." "The bitter arrow was occasionally shot back." These and other similar remarks are corroborated by Miss Fox. Mrs. Carlyle is depicted by her as a woman of great conversational power, who was very apt to be exclusively sharp and even bitter in speech. Thus, an exceptional visit to Mrs. Carlyle is called "a humane little visit. I don't think she roasted a single soul, or even body." In another passage she is described as "giving some brilliant female portraiture, but all in caricature." She is said to "foster in him the spirit of contradiction and restlessness," and again "she plays all manner of tricks on her husband, telling wonderful stories of him in his presence, founded almost solely on her bright imagination." This passage ends indeed with the statement "They are a very happy pair"; but that such treatment must have had an irritating effect on him is clear, and the inference is borne out by many private anecdotes of the two. Our belief, founded on what we have heard, is that in some of his least agreeable qualities, especially in contemptuous criticism

of others, she encouraged him, and that she was by no means the least to blame in many of the outbursts of passion that occurred between them.

We should not have said so much but that the subject has been already much discussed, and Mr. Froude devotes a considerable part of his two volumes to it. The private lives of these two remarkable persons have become public property, and we are compelled to take notice of Carlyle's married life in estimating his character as a whole. Whatever may have been his faults, and though his wife may not have felt that her example was an encouragement to others to "marry men of genius," yet behind the roughness and reserve of her husband she was able to recognize the devoted love that he had for her, and to foretell, as we know for a fact, the "apotheosis," to use her own expression, that awaited her when no longer by his side.

The impression that this striking character leaves on our minds, as we read the various accounts of him, is that he was a man born out of time. He should have lived in a simpler, slower age. The complexity and hurry of modern life irritated and oppressed him; he made no attempt to explain these things, he did not use them in his theory of life, and when in practice he was confronted with them he raged at them with picturesque fury. His thoughts were always concerned with the simple broad facts of human life, with the moral rather than with the social phenomena of the age. When transplanted from the primitive solitudes of Ecclefechan and Craigenputtock to Edinburgh and London, he seems never to have his imagination stirred by the vastness and intricacy of the causes that have

produced these great cities, or by the multitudinous facts of civilization ; he has no thoughts for the manifold interests and conflicting motives that are working on the busy crowds of men ; he is thinking of man in the simplest form, of the moral nature which is but little affected by the growth of nations, of the relations of individual men one to another, and to the "Eternities and Immensities." *Sartor Resartus* is an attempt to strip off not only the trappings of rank and station from individuals, but the accretions and deposits left by civilization on the original framework of society. Man is interesting to him in himself rather than in his conditions and surroundings. He reduces every problem to its simplest elements, seeing, for instance, in war only the bringing "into actual juxtaposition" of able-bodied men from French and English villages of "Dumdrudge," and the mutual slaughter of "these poor blockheads." His peculiar humour consists largely in the unexpected simplification of the complex facts of life ; his vision was so keen that in piercing through all outer shells and coverings to the underlying realities, it often led him to disregard these coverings altogether, and to forget that they too are realities of a certain sort. Hence we can see why his life was very much of the antique stamp. You hear very little of the "gifts of civilization," of railways and telegraphs and scientific discoveries, except as fuel for his wrath. His standard of religion and morality was the Puritan of some centuries back ; he saw the last specimens of the race in Annandale, and "all this is altered utterly at present." All through his life his mind kept on recurring to the parents and friends of his youth in the simple village life, and

contrasting them with the more subtle and intricate natures of cultivated London men and women, not at all to the advantage of these :

"There is a kind of citizen which Britain used to have, very different from the millionaire Hebrews, Rothschild money-changers, Demosthenes Disraelis, and inspired young Goschens and their 'unexampled prosperity.' Weep, Britain, if the latter are among the honourable you now have."

His contempt for political economy, the only science which has as yet been able to cope with the complexity of modern social life, was partly due to this instinct for simple forces and plain moral laws. Political economy revels in the complicated phenomena of civilization, and deals, or at that time used to deal, with them altogether apart from the moral law, scientifically and not ethically. But to Carlyle the only interest was the moral law, and the complicated phenomena of civilization were abominable in his eyes.

All this makes his teaching of less value than it would have been had he realized more fully the manifoldness of modern life. He had a clear eye for principles, but the intermediate stages between principles and action, the modifications and changes which civilization has wrought in the external expression of principles, were not clear to him, and he would put them aside with scornful impatience. This is now explained by the details of his life, which shows us the Ecclefechan Calvinist transplanted into the uncongenial crowd of London, and dwelling there all his days, a prophet of the desert carried into the city. His teaching, like his character, was more suited to the birth of a society than to its full life ; his nature

craved for simplicity and strength, and his destiny allotted to him a period of weakness and confusion.

There is always a certain relief in turning from the lives of great writers to their works. Their lives are troubled and stained by the circumstances in which they find themselves; they are full of whatever weakness their characters may possess. But their works are, almost always, the expression of their better natures; to them they escape from the sorry confusion and vexation of practical life, and from them they are careful to keep as far as may be the weakness and faultiness of their own characters. So it is with Carlyle. His life was, as we have said, on the whole a noble life: but it had been better for the enjoyment of his writings had he remained to us what to most he used to be, an impersonal voice, warning and exhorting and teaching us as from a higher level than ours. But this is really an unworthy feeling. He was strong enough to hide his weakness and to keep it from marring his work, and we ought to be able to take what he gave us, the "poor message" he had to deliver, without impairing its force by the thought that he did not altogether live up to the lessons he tried to teach. Even his writings, indeed, are not free from some of his characteristic faults; exaggeration, passion, and a perverse melancholy are visible in them as they were in his life, but they are wholly free from that weakness and littleness of character which have been made known to us by posthumous revelations.

Carlyle, it has been said, was a second-rate man with a marvellous gift of expression. This remark is, perhaps, a fair statement of what many have thought about Carlyle, and as such it is worth considering. A second-

rate man is, we take it, a man without real, inspiring, originating force, with nothing new or specially valuable to tell the world. Add to such a man a wonderful power of speech or writing, and you have Carlyle.

Now, we do not believe that any really second-rate man can have an extraordinary gift of expression : or at least, if he is second-rate, the expression is also second-rate. Style, expression, power of language, whatever it may be called, is part of the intellectual endowment of the man ; it represents the way in which the facts of life come to him, and from him are given out again to his audience. It is always possible to distinguish the mere rhetorician, who has nothing to say but a great power of saying it well, from the man whose soul is so penetrated with the truth he sees that his mode of utterance is transformed and moulded into harmony with it. Such a man is a poet ; but Carlyle was not, in form, a poet. Rather with him the expression, the style, was formed not by the truths he proclaimed, but by his most characteristic intellectual endowment, his power of sight. His command over language is no mere capacity for putting other men's thoughts into eloquent words, but it is the direct result of his abnormal power of seeing clearly, and it enables him to make others see. Even if there were no original thoughts in Carlyle's writings, yet the force and descriptive power of his style would of itself make him a great teacher, for such is a man who can teach others to see facts by the clearness with which he sees them and depicts them. Truths came to him in images, concrete visions, not abstract thoughts, and by no processes of reasoning, but by his own imaginative

strength, he lays hold of them and fixes them for us on the enduring canvas of his pictorial style. Such a style is the effect, not the cause, of his greatness as a writer; it is the result of his unique insight, and the impossibility of really imitating it is the measure of the excellence of that special gift. The latest published of all Carlyle's writings is as good an example of his descriptive power as any of his more finished works; for morose and almost inhuman as the *Reminiscences of my Irish Journey* may be, there can be no question as to the power with which the dreary squalor of Ireland after the famine is made visible to the reader by the hasty words in which Carlyle recorded what he saw. The book is full of bits like this, as of a painter who with a few smudges gives you the true impression of a whole rainy landscape:

"'Outdoor relief' next; at a wretched little country shop; Shine's frank swift talk to the squalid crowd: dusty squalor, full of a noisy hum, expressing greed, suspicion, and *incarnated nonsense* of various kinds. Ragged wet hedges, weedy ditches; nasty ragged, spongy-looking flat country hereabouts; like a *drunk* country fallen down to sleep amid the mud."

The careless vigour of the description wanted only the final image to make it an absolutely faithful picture of the impression many get, but few can put into words, from their Irish experiences.

The fault of the style is not its eccentricity and irregularity, which is the commonest accusation brought against it. The accusation is true, but it is not very important. It is not true, as is often assumed, that only classical works become classics; that books written in an eccentric style are not more than a nine

days' wonder. Perfection of form is indeed a great preserver of what otherwise the world would very willingly have let die; *ce qu'il ne vaut pas la peine de dire, on le chante*, and the beauty of the music, the form, makes the commonplace matter immortal; but it does not follow that writings without regular form cannot live. Rabelais, Sterne, Richter, to mention only humorists who, partly at least, resemble Carlyle, show no signs of becoming obsolete; Shakspeare himself has been, and is still, accused, not without justice, of barbarous style and irregular construction; S. Augustine's *Confessions*, one of the only two classics which have come to us from the dark ages, is written, according to Macaulay, in "the style of a field preacher"; and much of the grandest poetry of the Old Testament is, so far as manner is concerned, eccentric, rough, and obscure. Critics, whose function is to maintain the laws of form, are very apt to be unduly prejudiced against works of art which transgress those laws, and are often in consequence found in conflict with the popular judgment; and in the long run the critics have to submit and reconstruct their theories. Carlyle's writings will not have a shorter life because of their irregularity, bound up as that is with their peculiar excellences. The fault is rather that, being in substance poetry, they are not cast into the form of poetry.

Sir J. F. Stephen has called Carlyle the greatest poet of our age, and has singled out as his "most memorable utterance" the magnificent passage in *Sartor Resartus*, in which he describes the generations of mankind hasting "stormfully across the astonished earth." It is quite true, this is genuine poetry,

grander, perhaps, than has been written by any poet of our age. But what one feels in reading this and many other passages is that the want of singing power, the absence of music, rhythm, metre, or whatever name it may have, prevents this grand poetry from sinking deep into the hearts of men. Thoughts, visions, images, are there in almost reckless profusion, but they miss their mark, and pass from the mind, leaving far less impression than many a less profound and pregnant utterance of poets who have possessed the gift of song. Carlyle himself seems to have felt this in the very passage referred to, for he ends by quoting, as no real singer ever does, another man's expression of the same truth, because he felt that that summed up and perpetuated for ever the thought that in a hundred transitory forms he was struggling to utter. His prose, almost unequalled in its vivid grandeur, falls back at the end upon the most solemn lines of the noblest passage in all poetry :

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

Do we not feel, did not Carlyle feel, that this is the true mode of utterance for such thoughts as his, and that his inability to give them this poetical form robs him of much of the force that he would otherwise have had ? When one thinks of the world-wide influence and familiarity that the gift of song has conferred upon the splendid commonplaces of such passages as Byron's address to the ocean, it is easy to see what Carlyle has lost by his inability to express in worthy music the vast and majestic visions of his imagination. On almost every page of *Sartor Resartus* there are thoughts

and images which only rhythm could fitly enshrine, and which without rhythm cannot, as they ought, dwell in the mind and bear fruit. The mere descriptions, or rather transfigurations, of natural scenes are of the highest poetical power :

"A hundred and a hundred savage peaks, in the last light of Day ; all glowing, of gold and amethyst, like giant spirits of the wilderness ; there in their silence, in their solitude, even as on the night when Noah's Deluge first dried ! Beautiful, nay solemn, was the sudden aspect to our Wanderer. He gazed over those stupendous masses with wonder, almost with longing desire ; never till this hour had he known Nature, that she was One, that she was his Mother and divine. And as the ruddy glow was fading into clearness in the sky, and the Sun had now departed, a murmur of Eternity and Immensity, of Death and of Life, stole through his soul ; and he felt as if Death and Life were one, as if the Earth were not dead, as if the Spirit of the Earth had its throne in that splendour, and his own spirit were therewith holding communion."

This is at least equal to most descriptive verse ; yet everybody knows Byron's storm in the Alps, and no one remembers the numberless pictures of imaginative beauty scattered throughout Carlyle's writings. We believe that Carlyle will always be read, but he will not be familiar and powerful as poets are, because he could not express his message in the most enduring form.

In sheer power over language, and in capacity for producing great and varying effects of style, Carlyle was, in our opinion, far superior to any English writer of his time. The sudden changes of tone, the rapid

flashes of humour, the wide knowledge, the deep pathos, the earnestness, the scorn, and the ever-present sense of Infinity that distinguished his mind are faithfully represented in his language. In his later works the eccentricity is too obvious and too forced; he himself owned that there might be something of affectation in it. But the English language has had no grander uses than in *Sartor Resartus*, the *French Revolution*, and the earlier Essays. Such a passage as the well-known vision, as we might call it, of Marie-Antoinette's death, rising as it does suddenly upon one from the midst of the grotesqueness and irony of the *Diamond Necklace*, is more like a grand modulation in music than language; it appeals directly and overpoweringly to the deepest emotions. This may well compare with Burke's famous passage:

"Beautiful Highborn that wert so foully hurled low! For, if thy Being came to thee out of old Hapsburg Dynasties, came it not also (like my own) out of Heaven? *Sunt lachrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.* Oh is there a man's heart that thinks, without pity, of those long months and years of slow wasting ignominy; of thy Birth, soft cradled in Imperial Schönbrunn, the winds of heaven not to visit thy face too roughly, thy foot to light on softness, thy eye on splendour; and then of thy Death, or hundred Deaths, to which the guillotine and Fouquier Tinville's judgment bar was but the merciful end! Look *there*, O man born of woman! The bloom of that fair face is wasted, the hair is grey with care, the brightness of those eyes is quenched, their lids hang drooping, the face is stony pale as of one living in death. Mean weeds, which her own hand has mended, attire the Queen of the World. The death hurdle, where thou sittest pale, motionless,

which only curses environ, has to stop: a people, drunk with vengeance, will drink it again in full draught, looking at thee there. Far as the eye reaches, a multitudinous sea of maniac heads; the air deaf with their triumph-yell! The Living-dead must shudder with yet one other pang; her startled blood yet again suffuses with the hue of agony that pale face, which she hides with her hands. There is, then, *no* heart to say, God pity thee? O think not of these; think of HIM whom thou worshippest, the Crucified—who also treading the winepress *alone* fronted sorrow still deeper; and triumphed over it, and made it holy; and built of it a 'Sanctuary of Sorrow' for thee and all the wretched! Thy path of thorns is nigh ended. One long last look at the Tuileries, where thy step was once so light—where thy children shall not dwell. Thy head is on the block; the axe rushes—Dumb lies the World; that wild-yelling World, and all its madness, is behind thee."

But even his letters show just as great a mastery in the use of language as his finished works, and we will set against the solemn pathos of the last quotation this lovely passage from a letter to Miss Welsh inviting her to Hoddam:

"I will show you Kirkconnell churchyard, and Fair Helen's grave. I will take you to the top of Burnswark, and wander with you up and down the woods and lanes and moors. Earth, sea, and air are open to us here as well as anywhere. The water of Milk was flowing through its simple valley as early as the brook Siloa, and poor Repentance Hill is as old as Caucasus itself. There is a majesty and mystery in Nature, take her as you will. The essence of all poetry comes breathing to a mind that feels from every province of her empire. Is she not immovable, eternal, and immense in Annandale as she

is in Chamouni? The chambers of the East are opened in every land, and the sun comes forth to sow the earth with orient pearl. Night, the ancient mother, follows him with her diadem of stars; and Arcturus and Orion call *me* into the Infinitudes of space as they called the Druid priest, or the shepherd of Chaldea. Bright creatures! How they gleam like spirits through the shadows of innumerable ages from their thrones in the boundless depths of heaven."

The one quality which no critic can refuse to Carlyle is humour. Both in its highest and its deepest form it is present in almost everything he wrote. The mere accumulation of ludicrous images gives place to the almost fierce perception of the contrasts of life, and this again to that consciousness of the deep pathos in obscure and ignoble lives which underlies all true humour. One great element in it, as we have said, is the sudden simplification of the complex facts of life, such as the vision of the "naked Duke of Windlestraw addressing a naked House of Lords," or the totally unexpected retort upon the glorification of American institutions:

"What have they done? They have doubled their population every twenty years. They have begotten, with a rapidity beyond recorded example, Eighteen Millions of the greatest *bores* ever seen in this world before."

But though this reduction of everything to its lowest terms is perhaps the most characteristic element in Carlyle's humour, its most useful function is to serve, so to speak, as a substitute for rhythmical power in enforcing and perpetuating the truths he wishes to teach. He cannot put into verse what he has to say, but he can clothe it in images so ludicrous and

unexpected that they will haunt the mind almost as effectually as the smoothest poetry. Nothing could be more vivid and useful for its purpose than his description of a representative government which will not govern :

"If the thing called Government merely drift and tumble to and fro, no-whither, on the popular vortexes, *like some carcass of a drowned ass, constitutionally put 'at the top of affairs.'*"

It is difficult, in thinking of the problem of representative government, to get that malicious picture of the drowned ass out of one's mind ; and that is just what Carlyle intended to do. The admirable stroke in *Sartor Resartus* of making Teufelsdröckh mistake "Satan's Invisible World Displayed" for a History of the British Newspaper Press is of this class ; it is so sudden and unexpected that it dwells in the mind longer than any gravely reasoned exposition of the evils of anonymous journalism.

But the deepest and finest element in Carlyle's humour was the power of sympathy it gave him with the weakest and most obscure fellow-creature. Humour comes close to goodness in its capacity for drawing out the good that there is in the worst and the meanest ; and this was especially the gift of Carlyle, who, apart from his humour, was by nature disposed to dwell on the dark side both of events and of persons. But as we are told in conversation he would end his fiercest tirades with a roar of laughter and a sympathetic word, so in his writings. He rages against the sins and the folly of his fellow-creatures, but he is keenly alive to their humble and unnoticed virtues, and can depict them with a

sympathetic touch that recalls the earlier Carlyle of *Sartor Resartus*:

"With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow man: with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tired, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. . . . Man with his so mad Wants, and so mean Endeavours, had become the dearer to me; and even for his sufferings and his sins, I now first named him Brother."

We cannot stay to point out the way in which this power of sympathy enters into and colours all Carlyle's humour; let anyone who wishes to understand the difference between humour and wit, between sympathy and smartness, between true insight and superficial rhetoric, contrast Carlyle's with Macaulay's account of Boswell.

But, leaving the question of Carlyle's power of expression, is it just to say that, apart from this, he was but a "second-rate" man, with no great truths to teach, no inspiration, no originality? It may be difficult for us to see the greatness and originality of his teaching, for his influence was so great that his writings have become commonplace, and the truths he proclaimed are now, so to speak, part of the atmosphere we breathe. It is the same with all really great teachers. Their writings are taken up into the life of the race, and when we come to read them we find that we have always known what they say. But we forget that we know it because they said it. Truth once discovered and proclaimed loses its originality;

but falsehood can always be original. It is the really second-rate, clever man of whose writings we say, on first reading them, "Here is something new: why has the world neglected this?" For a very good reason: it is found to be out of harmony with the facts of life; it was new and clever, and it is still new and clever, for the world has cast it aside and sought elsewhere for truth. We are living in the atmosphere which Carlyle created: to understand his greatness and originality we must put ourselves in the place of the men of his generation, and try to imagine the effect of his first writings on minds trained as those of his contemporaries were trained. To a generation whose representative man of letters was Jeffrey, and which was beginning to worship Macaulay as "the greatest man in England, not excepting Brougham," Carlyle may well have seemed original. Perhaps we can easily conceive breaking away from Jeffrey and Brougham, and even from Bentham or Coleridge; but it is one thing to be independent of leaders whose influence no longer exists, and another to stand alone when everyone is flocking after this or that political or literary captain, and the air is thick with the shibboleths of various parties. It is Carlyle's peculiar characteristic that he belonged to none of these parties, and owned allegiance to none of these leaders. But the difficulty of this isolation may be estimated from the obvious impression which Jeffrey's position made upon him. The most independent and self-confident mind cannot help feeling a certain hesitating half-belief in the greatness of the leader of the hour. It is at least necessary to find reasons for not submitting to him; and even that may be to do him too much honour.

Carlyle was born at an unfavourable time for enthusiasm on either side in politics. He was too young to have felt the wave of excitement that carried the nation through the great war, he was too old to share the youthful hopefulness in the Reform Bill. The period of life at which a man's opinions and beliefs are formed, the years between twenty and thirty, coincided for him with those most dismal years of dulness and repression that succeeded the battle of Waterloo. Older men could buoy themselves up with the memories of great deeds in which they had borne some share, if only that of spectators: younger men, as they came into active life, could look onward to the anticipated triumphs of the New Era. It may sound fanciful, but we believe we are right in saying that, except Shelley and Carlyle, no one with any pretensions to be called great was born in England between the years 1790 and 1800. And Shelley is almost as good an instance as Carlyle of a man with a contemptuous disbelief in the British constitution, or in the prevailing creeds of party politicians. We may sum up Carlyle's influence in politics by saying that he taught Radicals to distrust Radicalism. He looked at the great Reform Bill with very dispassionate eyes, and proclaimed that "it is the noble people that makes the noble government; rather than conversely." The distrust in institutions as the means of regenerating society, the conviction, to use his own words, that "no high attainment, not even any far-extending movement among men, was ever accomplished mechanically," but only "dynamically," the gradually increasing hesitation as to the unmixed advantages of Democracy, these are some of the results of Carlyle's teaching. They

are commonplaces to us, but they were emphatically not commonplaces to the politicians of that age, to the Radicals, as well as to the Whigs and Tories. It was only by degrees that the "gospel of force" was fully developed in his mind; he himself ascribes its growth to the influence on him of Cromwell's life and the events of 1848; but in 1832 his beliefs were scarcely less uncongenial to the ordinary Benthamite Radical: "the opposite hemisphere," as he calls it, "was never wanting either, nor will be, as it miserably is in Mill and Co."

It is strange to see how indifferent Carlyle became to the very measures which were the practical results of his own teaching. In what was almost his last political utterance, *Shooting Niagara: and After?* he sums up the achievements of the Reformed Parliament since 1832, as "a general repeal of old regulations, fetters, and restrictions," and declares that in consequence "hardly any limb of the devil has a thrum or tatter of rope or leather left upon it." This is but the perverseness of old age, determined to see only matter for fault-finding in all contemporary existence; for he turns his eyes away from such legislative acts as the New Poor Law, or the whole course of Factory Legislation, which were measures carrying out the principles of his teaching in so far as those principles were seen to be true.

There are many who believe that Carlyle's great political or rather economical reform, "the organization of labour," has not yet been carried out as far as it might, and indeed will be; and part of the great controversy that lies in the immediate future between the socialist and anti-socialist schools of Liberalism

will centre round this question; but it is wrong to forget that much of the legislation of the last forty years has been occupied, roughly indeed, and somewhat blindly, in organizing labour. Carlyle was in reality a leader in the revolt against the *Laissez-faire* doctrine, and as such, along with a companion whom he would certainly have rejected with contempt, Comte, the "phantasmal *algebraic ghost*," as he calls him, he stands, where he would be greatly surprised to find himself, in the vanguard of modern Political Economy.

His best-known political doctrine was, however, one which has had only an indirect influence on modern politics. His denunciations of Democracy have, as we have said, inspired men with a certain distrust of the commonplace theory of Radicalism, but they have not by any means been adopted as political maxims. Conservatives have never been quite comfortable in appealing to Carlyle's authority, and on this subject modern Liberalism seems resolved to disregard his warnings. Calvinism in theology is losing its influence, and Carlyle's political Calvinism, in which "particular redemption" appears in a startling form, is not likely to hold its ground. It is no longer possible for anyone to believe that, theologically or politically, the greater part of the human race can be rightly described as "sons of the devil in overwhelming majority"; and as no sane politician proposes that the people shall govern, but only that they shall be able to choose their own governors, many, not all, but many of Carlyle's violent attacks on modern Democracy lose their point.

The deepest exposition of Carlyle's political creed

is contained in his *French Revolution*. In reading this splendid work we must remember the overpowering effect which it had upon the minds of his contemporaries. We are apt now to forget that it is not only a work of art, a series of brilliant pictures of stirring events, but a great lesson full of meaning and warning to all thinking men. The lesson is to our ears trite and old; it may be summed up in the German saying, "*Die Welt-geschichte ist das Welt-gericht*," the world is judged by its own history; but it was a new and a startling lesson to those for whom it was written. It was Carlyle's own philosophy of history, and he found it written out most clearly in the French Revolution. "I should not have known," he said, "what to make of this world at all, if it had not been for the French Revolution." Injustice, unbelief, dishonesty, lust, indolence, whatever may be included under the head of *lies*, must—this is the lesson of his history—sooner or later bring with them their own punishment. "The first of all gospels is this, that a lie cannot endure for ever."

But this lesson is enforced with a singular combination of prophetic fervour and philosophic reflection. At that time, at least, Carlyle could see both sides of a question. The evils of the old society were great, and they were doomed, but they should have been exterminated "not with hatred, with headlong selfish violence, but in clearness of heart, with holy zeal, gently, almost with pity." Carlyle could see clearly enough the truth that possessed the whole soul of Burke, and he expresses it in what is perhaps the most remarkable chapter in the book, viz. that which he entitled "Questionable."

"Great truly is the Actual; is the Thing that has rescued itself from bottomless deeps of theory and possibility, and stands there as a definite indisputable Fact, whereby men do work and live, or once did so. Wisely shall men cleave to that while it will endure; and quit it with regret, when it gives way under them. Rash enthusiast of Change, beware! Hast thou well considered all that Habit does in this life of ours; how all Knowledge and all Practice hang wondrous over infinite abysses of the Unknown, Impracticable; and our whole being is an infinite abyss *overarched* by Habit, as by a thin Earth-rind, laboriously built together?"

One rises from Carlyle's *French Revolution* with a deep sense of two great truths: the pitiless retribution that awaits the societies as well as individuals that have become in their very essence false and make-believe; and also the incalculable nature of the forces which lie beneath modern society. Let them once escape from control, and no one can foresee the end.

"Without such Earth-rind of Habit, call it system of Habits, in a word, *fixed ways* of acting and believing —Society could not exist at all. . . . Let but, by ill chance, in such ever-enduring struggle, your 'thin Earth-rind' be once *broken*! The fountains of the great deep boil forth; fire-fountains, enveloping, engulfing. Your 'Earth-rind' is shattered, swallowed up; instead of a green flowery world, there is a waste wild weltering chaos, which has again, with tumult and struggle, to *make* itself into a world."

Nevertheless, this is not history; it is not even a good narrative. It is not a sane, straightforward account even of the mere external facts with which it deals; it is, as Mr. Lowell expresses it in an admir-

able image, "history seen by flashes of lightning." Episodes and single scenes stand out with startling vividness, but there is much left untold and unexplained. And again, it is not history, in the more modern sense of an investigation and description of the causes of things. Carlyle has his broad and true generalization, that "a lie cannot endure for ever," and with that he is content. We have to go elsewhere for a detailed account of the actual causes of the French Revolution, for the more useful indications of the means by which society may avoid such cataclysms in the future. For these we must go to patient observers like De Tocqueville. Carlyle, true to his instinct for simplicity, cares nothing for the intricacies of the preceding conditions, and sees in the strange and complicated economical and social phenomena of the *Ancien Régime* only so many instances of the "mad state of things" which was doomed to perish. His great moral generalization was true, but it is possibly less useful than the humbler analysis which laboriously traces out the intermediate causes, the less obvious instruments by which the Divine purpose is carried out. But it is well to notice that, accustomed though we may be to the lesson he had to teach, it required all the force of a great genius to impress it on men's minds. It was not a mere generalization, it was not a mere statement of deductions made from unpublished records, it had nothing abstract or dead about it; it was like the presentation of a great drama, in which men could see the truth enacted in living reality before their eyes.

We approach a harder task when we come to estimate Carlyle's religious teaching. In a sense, and

a very important sense, everything he wrote or did was religious ; it was all closely connected with a very living conviction of the supremacy of God's will. So far, indeed, as he was able to translate religion into history and politics, and bring the omnipresence of religious truth home to men, his work had a most important religious influence. The extreme breadth and vagueness of his doctrine was favourable to this sort of teaching ; and he had an unequalled power of making men feel how close to them are the " Infinities and Eternities." But, great as has been his religious influence on non-religious minds, we question whether the religious position of our age has been much influenced, for good or for ill, by Carlyle. To minds already filled with the general conviction in the reality of the soul, immortality, and God, he had not much to give ; the mere translation of the well-known words into his peculiar phraseology rather weakened than strengthened their power on men to whom these facts were already the foundation of all knowledge and all speculation. We believe that his real influence in this respect was to give to " secularists " like J. S. Mill a vague sense of something beyond what they could see: a doubt of the adequacy of reason and sense to penetrate all possible subjects. But positive religious belief he could not give ; at most he could inspire emotions and " vague misgivings " that might become the material with which religious belief could be constructed. But before that could be, they must be condensed and compacted and moulded into shape.

Religion is the only sphere into which he admits democracy. The individual who, in the affairs of daily life, is, according to Carlyle, utterly incapable of

governing himself, must "get to see" religious truth for himself, or remain "void of belief.

"Of all these divine possessions it is only what thou art become equal to that thou canst take away with thee. Except thy own eyes have got to see it, except thy own soul have victoriously struggled to clear vision and belief of it, what is the thing seen and the thing believed by another or by never so many others? Alas, it is not thine . . . but only a windy echo and tradition of it bedded in hypocrisy, ending sure enough in tragical futility, is thine."

But however important a real faith may be, is it not a fallacy to assume that a man cannot take this faith from another? Cannot Carlyle's king, or wise man, to whose keeping the "million blockheads" should entrust their lives, impress their souls also with a conviction of religious truth? It is a mere begging the question to say the one thing needful is faith; for is not every man's faith in great part always derived from others? Are we, in this alone, to be perpetually going back to the beginning, each man for himself, and disregarding what our predecessors have, with toilsome struggle, acquired for us? Sincerity of faith is of vital importance; but which is likely to be the most sincere, the faith that a dull and narrow man can find for himself out of the boundless confusion of the world, or the faith that he learns and takes on trust from the accumulated wisdom of his forefathers? It is a common fallacy, but nowhere is it more strange than in Carlyle, with his "sons of the devil in overwhelming majority."

This is closely allied with his various utterances about faith. Nothing can be truer or more necessary

for this age to realize than the oft-repeated assertion "that, for man's well-being, faith is properly the one thing needful." And one of the most valuable of the benefits conferred on us by Carlyle has been the enforcing of Goethe's saying: "All epochs wherein belief prevails, under what form it may, are splendid, heart-elevating, fruitful for contemporaries and posterity." Without faith, sincerity is almost impossible, and the other great lesson Carlyle has taught us is the necessity of sincerity. He has often been derided for his repeated diatribes against shams, impostures, cant, saying or believing the "thing that is not"; but we believe that of all his lessons this has sunk deepest into men's hearts; and that it is less easy to be unreal, or to do work that is only for show, since he wrote, than it was before. This alone would be a sufficient achievement for a moralist or historian, to have made men conscious of unreality. And sincerity in religion is certainly not less important than in worldly affairs. But the matter is not as simple as it seems on reading Carlyle's vehement expositions of his creed. In the first place it is untrue to say, as Goethe implies, that the form of belief matters not so long as there is belief under some form. Is not this to fall into the strangely common fallacy of making religion merely subjective? Religion, according to this view, is belief; surely it requires little thought to see that religion is, or should be, belief in what is true. And even granting that it is only a state of mind, surely it matters greatly what state of mind it is! A nation's civilization, its degree of goodness and wisdom, may to a great extent be calculated from the nature of its religious beliefs.

One belief immolates thousands of victims to appease a fancied almighty despot; another induces men to live in the practice of nameless vices. Is it conceivable that, with these facts before us, we can wholly assent to the doctrine that "all epochs wherein belief prevails, *under what form it may*, are splendid and heart-elevating"? But leaving this aside, for it is almost too obvious to linger over, does not Carlyle lay too much stress on the certainty of faith? "A man's religion," he says, "consists not of the many things he is in doubt of and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of and needs no effort for believing." Here again, important though it assuredly is, this is but a partial truth. Faith is one of the noblest and most elevating gifts that come to men, but it is still human, and therefore still imperfect. No man can think to have one part of his spiritual nature exempt from the law of infirmity; no human quality can be unstained with human corruption. Faith may increase and grow purer and more certain, but it cannot be the same as knowledge; it is impossible that there can be needed "no effort for believing." And Carlyle's doctrine is the very gospel of despair to those whose spirits at times flag and faint, and hope and faith die down in them, and no truth is held without an overshadowing doubt. "No effort for believing!" Why, hardly a saint has died without the temptation to doubt; those who live most in the contemplation of the unseen are most alive to the numberless difficulties and darknesses of their creed, and not one would not gladly join in that most pathetic and truest of paradoxes, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

Carlyle ignores stages in faith, he will have all or none; and it is therefore easy to understand his contempt for those manifestations of religion with which he was most familiar. He believed in the faith of his parents, but he pours utter scorn upon a religion of "Bishops, Gorham controversies, and richly endowed Churches and Church-practices," for in such a religion he recognizes no real faith. It is a question whether he ever seriously looked for it; his impatience of Coleridge's teaching made him apparently disregard the "spectral Puseyisms" and other religious results, as he thought them, of Coleridge's influence. Goethe with his wonderful insight had detected one at least of Carlyle's distinguishing characteristics: "Carlyle was resting on an *original foundation*, and was so happily constituted that he could develop out of himself the requirements of what was good and beautiful—*out of himself*," comments Mr. Froude: "not out of contact with others." In nothing is this characteristic so plain as in his religious belief; and though Goethe thought that in this he was "happily constituted," yet there is great reason to doubt whether any man has so comprehensive a mind that he can afford to disregard the religious experiences of others, even when their beliefs differ from his. God reveals Himself in many ways, and to understand even that small fragment of Infinity that is made known to us we must not confine ourselves to what each man's eyes can see for themselves, but learn what others are seeing, till, from the combined experience of very different minds, a truer and more comprehensive faith is gradually acquired. Carlyle in his works sometimes taught the necessity of sympathy and toleration: in

his own practice he had little of either. He was not quick to change his opinions, nor ready to learn from others; and this is especially true of his religion. The *Life of Sterling* is one of the most perfect biographies in the language, but it has one great defect. Sterling had in all their intercourse apparently taught Carlyle nothing, because from the very first Carlyle stands outside him, and looks at him only as an instance of his preconceived ideas about life. He puts aside, with good-humour, perhaps, but with some scorn, all Sterling's religious beliefs, in so far as they differed from his own, minimizes them, and treats them as unworthy of consideration. It never occurred to him that he might learn from this man, inferior to him though he undoubtedly was; that the fact of his religious position was a fact of which it would be well to take account, and not one to be dismissed as a "diseased development" produced by the "transcendental moonshine" of a "morbidly radiating Coleridge." The error is due to Carlyle's fixed determination to consider all contemporary religious belief, except his own, as conscious or unconscious self-deception. Cromwell, Luther, John Knox, Mahomet, and other pious men of the past were sincere; but no one could be sincere who, in Carlyle's time, believed in anything more definite than Carlyle's "Infinities and Immensities." He lavishes pity and sympathy of a certain sort upon these poor victims, but there is no sign of an attempt at intellectual sympathy; he never thinks it possible that they can have anything to teach him. Throughout the book Carlyle seems to look at Sterling rather as one looks at a bright and clever child, with love

and good-nature combined with something of pity, almost of contempt. Yet this was the man of whom J. S. Mill wrote: "If he did but know the moral and intellectual influence which he exercises without writing or publishing anything, he would think it quite worth living for," and to whom he wrote "that he would gladly exchange powers of usefulness with him." That Carlyle, in his own religious self-concentration and spiritual pride, seriously misrepresented Sterling, we are led to think by Miss Fox's criticism, which, however, we grant may have been biassed: "It is painful enough to see the memorial of his friend made the text for utterances and innuendos from which one *knows* that he would now shrink even more than ever." But the *Life of Sterling* bears in every page the marks of the un-Christian and unwise temper which Carlyle himself describes as the result of his spiritual struggles and victory.

"This year I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonizing doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering mud-gods of my epoch; had escaped as from a worse than Tartarus, with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether, where, blessed be heaven! I have for the spiritual part ever since lived, looking down upon the welterings of my poor fellow-creatures, in such multitudes and millions still stuck in that fatal element, and have had no concern whatever in their Puseyisms, ritualisms, metaphysical controversies and cobwebberies, and no feeling of my own except honest silent pity for the serious or religious part of them, and occasional indignation, for the poor world's sake, at the frivolous secular and impious part."

Such a temper is not one which could be favourable to progress in religion, and we may see in this absolute contempt for other men's beliefs some explanation of his isolation and unfruitfulness in spiritual matters.

But what was Carlyle's own belief? Mr. Froude devotes several pages to the elucidation of this subject, and supports his exposition by a long paper in which Carlyle, unsatisfactorily to himself, had tried to state his own position. We cannot say that it is much more satisfactory to us. To begin with the negative part: he rejected historical Christianity because, as Mr. Froude puts it,

"he based his faith, not on a supposed revelation, or on fallible human authority. He had sought the evidence for it, where the foundations lie of all other forms of knowledge, in the experienced facts of things interpreted by the intelligence of man. Experienced fact was to him revelation, and the only true revelation."

But, the "historical Christian" may here interpose, what else do we mean by revelation? By revelation we mean experienced facts, the facts of our Lord's life first and foremost, which cannot be interpreted fairly and rationally by the "intelligence of man," except as the revelation of God upon earth. Carlyle believed most firmly in our Lord, to judge from all his utterances on the subject, and invariably speaks of Him with a noble reverence. We find no attempt to explain away the facts of His life, but also we find no attempt to reconcile them with any other theory than that of His Divinity. How can the "intelligence of man interpreting" these undoubted facts arrive at a consistent and scientific belief on the

subject, without confronting the alternative, so well known to all who have tried to think out the subject—either this Man was God Incarnate, or His was not, what Carlyle calls it, "the highest voice ever heard on this earth," but the misleading utterance of an imposter or a madman? This alternative there is no sign that Carlyle, with his usual hasty contempt for reasoning, ever confronted; his appeal to "experienced facts" and the "intelligence of man" is therefore premature.

But Mr. Froude will say, by revelation he means "revelation technically so called, revelation confirmed by historical miracles," and it is the miraculous element in the history that differentiates "revelation" from other "experienced facts." Well, even then there remains that alternative to be confronted; but leaving that aside, we find that Carlyle "felt himself forbidden to believe in miracles," because "he had learnt that effects succeeded causes uniformly and inexorably, without intermission or interruption." This is, of course, a very old controversy, and it is one which it needs a more accurate reasoner than Carlyle to disentangle. The declaration that Mr. Froude quotes, "It is as certain as mathematics that no such thing ever has been or can be," is simply a declaration of Carlyle's unfitness to decide on such a question, as everyone who has thought about the distinction between "mathematical" and "physical" certainty must acknowledge. But, without going further into this interminable dispute, we may appeal from Carlyle "late in his own life" to the Carlyle of *Sartor Resartus*, from Mr. Froude's interpretations to his own written declaration on the subject. We require

no better answer to Mr. Froude's exposition than the chapter in *Sartor Resartus* entitled "Natural Supernaturalism."

"'But is not a real Miracle simply a violation of the Laws of Nature?' ask several. Whom I answer by this new question, What are the Laws of Nature? To me perhaps the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these Laws, but a confirmation; were some far deeper Law, now first penetrated into, and by Spiritual Force, even as the rest have all been, brought to bear on us with its Material Force.

"Here, too, some may inquire, not without astonishment, On what ground shall one, that can make iron swim, come and declare that therefore he can teach religion? To us, truly, of the nineteenth century, such declaration were inapt enough, which nevertheless to our fathers, of the first century, was full of meaning.

"'But is it not the deepest Law of Nature that she be constant?' cries an illuminated class. 'Is not the Machine of the Universe fixed to move by unalterable rules?' Probable enough, good friends; nay I, too, must believe that the God, whom ancient inspired men assert to be 'without variableness or shadow of turning,' does indeed never change; that Nature, that the Universe, which no one whom it so pleases can be prevented from calling a Machine, does move by the most unalterable rules. And now of you, too, I make the old inquiry, What those same unalterable rules, forming the complete statute-book of Nature, may possibly be?

"They stand written in our Works of Science, say you; in the accumulated records of man's experience? Was man with his experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundations of the Universe, and gauged every-

thing there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel, that they read His ground-plan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, This stands marked therein, and no more than this? Alas, not in anywise! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are; have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite without bottom as without shore. . . .

"System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident, of its little native Creek may have become familiar; but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time, (*un*miraculously enough) be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man: his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and Periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons."

The positive side of Carlyle's religion when we come to it does not seem, at first, to give the hungry soul so much spiritual nourishment as his enthusiastic descriptions of it would lead one to expect. It is difficult to state it formally without discovering its nakedness. It is certainly not Christianity; sometimes it is hardly religion at all. It was never more than a Calvinistic Theism, and it seems to have become more and more

vague, and more unlike Christianity as his life advanced. Though there may be strength, there is no comfort, in such a religion as is described in the paper published by Mr. Froude, and in the biographer's own summary of Carlyle's faith. It seems to be little more than a belief that God's Will governs the world, that the expression of that Will in the world of fact and in the laws of nature is what we call right, to go counter to God's Will is wrong, and finally that of God Himself we can know nothing certain but that He is and is just and almighty, and remains the same though all theories about Him change and pass away. Carlyle apparently thought this last truth of great importance; in this alone we shall find peace; this is "the crowning discovery, the essence and summary of all the sad struggles and wrestlings of these last three centuries." It is difficult to feel much confidence in this discovery. We know, and have always known, that whatever our theories may be, God is not affected by them, but remains the same, and the "spiritual universe" is not abolished because men have come to think differently about it. But our relation to God and to the spiritual universe is affected by our theories, and that is the important thing for us. How and in what way does the thought of God enter into our lives? This is nearly, if not quite, as vital a question as, how does God's Will affect our lives? Because, as far as we can see, our relation to God's will, our obedience to it or disregard of it, must to a great extent depend upon what we know or think of it. It is a poor consolation to tell us "that it is we and our dog-hutch that are moving all this while," if the result of such movement is that we know not what God's Will is. Religion is

the relation of man to God; change either of the correlatives and the relation must change, and what security have we, on Carlyle's own principles, that such changes will not go on for ever, in other words, that we shall never attain to religious Truth, or therefore to right religious practice?

This paper is, fortunately, not the only declaration of Carlyle's religious belief that we possess; for his religion, such as it was, is written, as we have said, on almost every page of his books. We can trace, even in this paper, the indication of the essential part of it: the truth which he did not discover, but which he preached with almost unique force, the duty of self-renunciation. But in this paper it is only an intellectual submission that is taught; we must learn to know that we are not the central point of the universe. Turn, however, to those few pages which contain the consummation and fruit of his teaching, the central chapters of *Sartor Resartus*, and we shall there learn that self-submission is primarily ethical, and that the "Everlasting Yea" is no intellectual solution of a problem of the reason, but a command addressed to the will and the heart, "Love not Pleasure; love God." The essence of his religion is therefore duty, the moral law; the path by which he made his escape from a vague Pantheism into a real relation to a personal God was the recognition of the moral nature of the Eternal Being whom he otherwise so blindly worshipped. With this clue we can follow him through the labyrinths of his religious visions; we can understand how the "eternities, and infinities, and immensities," which he has been so derided for perpetually preaching, are to him great realities with a definite

meaning. So far as we can understand from his own account, the moment of what he calls his "new birth" came when he realized his own freedom: "The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)'; to which my whole Me now made answer: '*I* am not thine, but Free, and for ever hate thee!'" From this consciousness of freedom the first step is to pass to the consciousness of duty, of the battle that has to be fought with our own selfishness:

"For the God-given mandate, 'Work thou in Well-doing,' lies mysteriously written, in Promethean prophetic characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted gospel of freedom. And as the clay-given mandate, 'Eat thou and be filled,' at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper?"

From this "preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self," it is not difficult to pass to the consciousness of God, revealed in nature, but hidden till man recognizes that the world is not meant to satisfy our appetites, and could not do so had we each "God's infinite universe altogether to himself." Nature, then, does not give us happiness; but when this is once recognized, nature does give us God:

"*Es leuchtet mir ein*, I see a glimpse of it! there is in man a HIGHER than love of happiness: he can do without happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach-forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing

testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired doctrine art thou also honoured to be taught; O heavens! and broken with manifold merciful afflictions, even till thou become contrite, and learn it! O thank thy destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain; thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the Deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time thou are not engulfed, but borne aloft into the Azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works it is well with him."

We are reminded of a striking and instructive passage in one of his letters: "You have a right to anticipate excitement and enjoyment. The highest blessing I anticipate is peace."

From this conviction we are led on to the knowledge that freedom, self-renunciation, the love of God, lead up to, and are themselves made possible by, dutiful action. Thus the course of practical religion is, as he calls it, "a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom." Starting from the sudden revelation of a free personality, he ends with the solemn words he was never tired of repeating, "Work while it is called To-day; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."

It is easy to say, all this is nothing new; it is, at least, as old as Christianity; and even in details it is taken without much variation from Kant's Ethics. But moral truth is no new thing, nor can we expect it to be new; what is new is the force with which it is

preached. This is the true answer to the assertion that Carlyle was but a second-rate man with a marvellous power of expression. No second-rate man could have written those chapters of *Sartor Resartus*; no second-rate man could thus have translated his own spiritual experience into language of strength and inspiration for all. The second-rate man's experience remains particular and unfruitful, partly because he never clearly distinguishes and feels it for himself; partly because he cannot impart it, universalize it. In Carlyle we recognize one of the world's teachers, for what he knew to be truths he could proclaim with a voice that men could not but listen to. The greatness of a teacher does not lie in the novelty of the truths which he knows, but in the force by which he constrains men to listen to him, and still more to believe him. Mr. Bagehot has said that the liking for Carlyle is a youthful taste, which wears off with years and experience. He did not recognize that to inspire the young is at least as great and valuable an achievement as to instruct the old. Carlyle's merit as a moralist consists in the contagious force of his own moral nature.

We are conscious of having omitted much in this survey of the great writer's influence. For evil as well as for good he has so deeply affected our generation that it is difficult to refrain from pointing out traces of his handiwork in widely different directions. Not only in the noisy adherents of the "gospel of force," but in such curiously dissimilar writers as J. S. Mill, Ruskin, Dickens, and Matthew Arnold, we find in greater or less degree the unmistakeable marks of Carlyle's power. Without

going beyond the four writers we have named, it is easy to see how, through them, the effects of Carlyle's character and doctrines must have been extended and perpetuated. Had he done nothing more than profoundly to modify Mill's rigid economical and political theories, he would still be a most real and living force in the social life of our generation.

But he has done much more. Politically, Carlyle's is not a constructive force. His influence is indirect; he checks and modifies and makes men pause. He is the only really great Conservative writer of our time, though he would justly reject the name, and Conservatives may shrink from accepting his help. Even in politics he was far more than Conservative, but it is his Conservatism that has chiefly survived. To understand the truth of Goethe's saying, "Carlyle is a moral force of great importance," we must turn from his politics to his ethics and to his religion. We must give ourselves up to the influence of his abiding sense of the presence of God about us and within us; we must stand with him "at the conflux of two Eternities," and see with his eyes the "Godlike rendered visible: Eternity looking through Time." For it is by these feelings of the infinity and eternity of man's life and destiny that Carlyle is an ennobling and elevating influence; from these feelings he derives the force of his exhortations to labour, of his denunciations of what is false and dishonest. The strong grasp of reality, the permanent impulse which he has given to sincerity and truth, the sense of the excellence of law and order, as expressing God's Will, these things make up the chief part of Carlyle's greatness, and these things are due to his feeling of

the encompassing mystery of eternity. There is a dark side to his teaching. His love of order tended to become materialism; law with him degenerated into force; sincerity was not always distinguished from brutality: but the wisdom of learners is to take, as far as we may, what is good, and to put away and forget what is evil, in the teaching of those few men to whom are given insight and force to guide their fellow-creatures. We will think of Carlyle as he himself has taught us to think of great men, in spite of their weaknesses and failures, as

"one of those to whom, under ruder or purer form, the Divine Idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself; and, across all the hulls of Ignorance and earthly Degradation, shine through, in unspeakable Awfulness, unspeakable Beauty, on their souls; who therefore are rightly accounted Prophets."

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GEORGE ELIOT.[1]

COMPARISONS in literature may be most useless, but they may also be most fruitful. It is difficult very often to make clear to ourselves the peculiar manner in which some great writer affects us, till a sudden perception of his relation to some other more familiar genius sets his qualities in a true light, brings out their individuality, and illuminates what before was obscure and vague in his influence. If we limit comparison to the function of illustrating and explaining one genius by another, and do not attempt the invidious task of ranking one above the other, we shall find that it is a most useful means of rightly understanding an author's excellences. This means we would employ in a somewhat audacious manner in the case of the great writer whom we have so lately lost.

To those who are habitually incredulous of the merits of their own generation, it will sound worse than absurd to name Shakspeare and George Eliot in the same breath, but nevertheless it is difficult to compare our great novelist with any other English writer so as to bring out her chief characteristics. Some parts of her method, some tricks of her style, can be referred, with more or less certainty, to the

[1] Written in 1881.

influence of contemporary writers. Thackeray, for instance, may very probably be responsible for her perpetual commentary of satirical, sometimes cynical, remarks upon her own characters. Another less obvious source from which she drew may perhaps be found in Balzac; for in him, with very great differences, we see a similar design of portraying provincial life in its monotonous and tragic intensity, a similar ruthlessness in depicting mean and ignoble characteristics where truth required them, and a similar accumulation of detail: though with him it was the external details of circumstance and setting, with her it was the details of the inner life and conduct. But, after all, these are partial resemblances; and they are resemblances—let us say it plainly—to men who were not her equals. To find a fitter, because more complete and more adequate, parallel, we must go back to the other great genius whom Warwickshire produced. The comparison is so clearly not exact that it were a waste of time to point out the differences between them; many of them can be summed up in the one fact that George Eliot was not a poet, though a poetical apprehension of the facts of life forms the medium in which her imagination sometimes works. Our object is rather to trace the resemblances, and they seem to us to be these. George Eliot dealt with human character and conduct in its whole extent; she saw and recorded facts with unswerving fidelity; but the shrewdness of her observation was ennobled by her conception of moral principles and of the tragedy of moral conflicts; she lit up what is sordid and repulsive by a pervading humour, and, above all, she saw and preserved by imaginative power the abiding

principles of life amid the shifting accidents of external conditions and historical changes. This combination of qualities she shared with Shakspeare, and with him alone. Without trying to determine how far he possessed them in a greater degree than she did, we cannot refuse to see a similarity between the genius of the man who sketched, as a drama must necessarily only sketch, the decadence of Macbeth, and that of the woman who traced, as a novel is able to trace, the moral ruin of Tito Melema. They have many of the same characteristics, with the differing marks of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries upon them.

We have made this comparison partly in order to illustrate one of the chief characteristics of George Eliot: namely, her love of the past and her power of informing it with the moral life and reality which is gained by a profound knowledge of the problems of the present. Shakspeare, like George Eliot, lived in a time of great change. New arts, new religions, new ideas, were crowding upon the human mind in the sixteenth as they have been in the nineteenth century, and one peculiarity of his genius was that, while depicting the old world before the irruption of the new things which were to transform it, he gave it depth and reality by the thoughts and the problems of his own developed era. What Shakspeare did for mediæval England George Eliot has done for the England of her father's generation. This is an important element in her genius, because it is the result of the two deepest impulses in her nature: namely, sympathy with nearly all human characters, and a determination to seize upon the moral significance of the slightest acts and feelings. Her sympathy is based

upon her feeling for the common life of man, the simple natural instincts, the love of home, the love of children and parents, the primary wants which she so often emphasizes. Her own strongest attachment seems to have been to the early scenes of her home life, "my present past, my root of piety," as she calls them in her most natural and pathetic poem. Whatever faults human beings may have, however much they may have obscured the brightness of their youth by mature sins, yet they are at least human; they had a home and home love, they still feel wants which are common to all, they still demand our pity and our help by reason of these wants. And so she seems instinctively to turn for rest from the stress and strain of modern conflicts and problems, from the hurry and complexity of modern life, to the slow-moving, simpler life of the past generations. She would like to forget the vexed questions of the day in the sober monotony of the "times before the Reform Bill," but it is impossible. The other necessity of her nature is upon her. Simple and slow and monotonous as human lives may sometimes be, yet they are still human, and therefore moral. However far from us in time or in ideas, yet their moral difficulties were in reality the same as ours; and therefore it is that George Eliot, by virtue of these two strong impulses in her, has been able, more than any other writer, to communicate to us her own sympathy with the past by showing us there the powerful working of the same moral laws as those which make our own lives real to us.

In most great writers it is easy to trace a certain definite change of style or of thought or of method,

but in George Eliot's works there is some difficulty in doing this. The change in her books does not seem constant or progressive; it is little more than the alteration in subject would naturally produce. It is not like a progress from crudeness through maturity to decay. And this is, perhaps, the true explanation. George Eliot changed little, for her earliest works are already mature. Different subjects produced different treatment, but there is no change in her point of view, in her fundamental principles, no advance from one mode of apprehending life to another, such as, for instance, has been traced in Shakspeare's progress, from *Love's Labour's Lost* to *The Tempest*. We do, indeed, see in her, as in Goethe, that gradual stiffening which age brings with it, which in Goethe was shown, as M. Schérer says, in the predominance of a cold and lifeless method of allegorizing in his later works, and in George Eliot took the form of an increased interest in the abstract questions of morality, apart from the characters exemplifying them. But in the main we are justified in saying that in her there is little, if any, real change of thought or of method. In estimating her writings, then, it will be found that any classification of them must cut across the chronological order, because they do not develop regularly, but only change with their subjects. Thus in her earliest work, *Scenes from Clerical Life*, we should separate the third tale, *Janet's Repentance*, from the others, as being quite of a different order, and akin to *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*, rather than to the simpler, more external narratives of the rest of the book or of *Silas Marner*. In *Amos Barton*, *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*, and *Silas Marner* the main interest

seems to be the mere delineation of character and the vivid painting of a bygone era. In *Amos Barton*, more perhaps than in any other of her novels, we are struck by one of her peculiar characteristics, the power of drawing out the interest that lies in commonplace, even contemptible characters, without in the least idealizing them or ascribing to them actions or sayings inconsistent with their real natures. Besides this quality, there is really very little in *Amos Barton* that can be analyzed, and yet no one can deny that it is the work of a master-hand. The writer's dramatic humour is shown in the gossip of the old ladies with the doctor, in the admirable clerical meeting (though she fails in the descriptions of the various clergy, which are crude and conventional), and in the slight scene in the workhouse. But the real interest and power of the sketch are concentrated in the person of Amos Barton; and it is not too much to say that no other living writer could have succeeded in combining so much ruthless fidelity of observation and description with such a generous sympathy as she has done in the extraordinary hero of her first tale. All her peculiar method and much of her genius are revealed at once in this sketch. *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story* we cannot place so high as many critics have done. The characters are either slight or unreal, and the story interests us rather by the illustration of old-world manners which it affords than by any merit in the plot or in the telling. It is one of her poetical works; and we are attracted, therefore, by the implied suggestions of beauty in it, by the old-fashioned atmosphere, by the poetical contrast of the young Italian girl with the stately and homely English life, and by the pathetic disclosure at the beginning of

the story of the broken and coarsened old man with one lovely ideal in his memory. These are poetical elements, which produce in us vague impressions of beauty ; but the story and the characters have always seemed to us inferior to nearly all her other writings. Captain Wybrow is a poor anticipation of Arthur Donnithorne ; Tina is unreal, and fails to attract our sympathy ; Mr. Gilfil is never clearly drawn, except in his lonely old age. We dwell on these failures because every work of this great writer seems to us important, even when it misses its object ; for in missing its chief mark it surely gives us many incidental excellences, subtle pieces of humour, a pervading suggestion of sympathetic observation, and continual reference to a past that is full of pathos and tenderness.

In classing *Silas Marner* with these two tales, we do so chiefly because, like them, the narrative is direct, and the moral lessons are implied more than prominently brought forward, as they are in her larger works. But though this directness and absence of moral discussions may be a mark of her early work, it cannot be said that *Silas Marner* is immature. Few English stories are as perfect : none of George Eliot's books show such a complete fusion of imagination and reflection ; present us, that is, with such an artistic whole. This, again, is one of her poetical works, by which we mean that in reading it our emotions are stirred, and our imagination is quickened, not by the actual facts related, but by the way in which they are told, by the scenery of the story, by the subtle suggestions and associations which accompany the descriptions of the persons and their actions. Poetry has its power, not in the direct thoughts or sensations with which it deals, but in the

tone and manner, in the incommunicable and indescribable atmosphere of beauty, with which it surrounds ideas and images. It is possible to analyze the meaning of poetry, the lessons which the poet wishes to teach, the truths which are given him to declare, but the more real the poetry is the more impossible is it to explain the charm with which the lesson is taught and the truth declared. This charm consists, not in rhythm and imagery alone, but, as we have said, in associations, hints, single words or facts, which summon up, as if by magic, a crowd of thoughts and sensations of beauty and pathos. It may be given by a suggested contrast, such as we have noted in *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story* ; or, as in *Silas Marner*, by the beautiful fancy that " the child was come instead of the gold—that the gold had turned into the child." " The money is gone I don't know where, and this is come from I don't know where." This is an essentially poetical way of suggesting the main idea of the book, the idea that the cramping and hardening effect of avarice can be counteracted only by a loving instinct of protection ; and it is the way in which the idea is presented that makes the charm of the book. To generalize it, as we have just done, destroys that charm ; it becomes at once a formula, the statement of which makes us inclined to doubt and deny it ; but embodied in the lifelike characters of Silas and Effie, and clad with the subtle beauty of fancy, it becomes poetry, and gives the character of a poem to the whole book. This character is kept up by the lovely pictures of child-life and the striking contrast between the solitary suspicious weaver and the bright grace of the orphan girl. The poem is an idyll, lacking only melody to take rank with the most

beautiful of its class. And the idyllic tone is not destroyed by the obtrusion of abstract moralizing upon the vivid character-drawing and imagery ; there is moral reflection in *Silas Marner*, but far more than in her other works it underlies and informs the whole ; it does not break in by itself in a somewhat discordant tone, giving us the sensation of speech suddenly intruding upon song, as in most of her books ; far less is it the staple of the whole, as in *Daniel Deronda*, but it pervades the story, giving it interest and truth without chilling the life and checking the movement. *Silas Marner* is not George Eliot's greatest, but it is her most perfect work ; for she seems to have conceived the subject as a whole, and the picture is therefore consistent with itself, it is in true perspective. This cannot be said of the other creations of her mind, as we shall try to show later.

But though the moral reflection is not obtruded, yet it is there very plainly. It is expressed in the striking character of Godfrey Cass, who is one of the best representatives of her favourite theme, the uselessness of trying to escape from the consequences of our own actions, even the most impulsive, the folly of relying on chance to help us out of difficulties that self-will has brought upon us, the moral degradation incurred by the attempt to shift off the burden of the inevitable results of our own action. Godfrey, Arthur Donnithorne, Tito, Bulstrode, are the various images in which the idea is presented ; and the idea itself we find stated here in one of the few passages of reflection in the book: "The evil principle deprecated in that religion is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind."

Both as a story and as a discussion of deep moral problems *Janet's Repentance* is a far greater work than the other tales with which it is included in the *Scenes from Clerical Life*. It is almost an accident that those treat of clerical life more than any other form of old-fashioned country existence; *Janet's Repentance* is a direct study of the moral effect of one soul upon another in that peculiar relation which is sacerdotal and nothing else. As such its accuracy and value are very great; if there could have been any real doubt as to the sex of George Eliot, it would have been justified by this study more than anything, for it seems as if nothing but actual experience in clerical life could have supplied the intimate knowledge of the conditions of moral lapse and recovery here shown. It is worthy of notice that George Eliot has depicted representatives of all schools among the clergy, and that her remorseless accuracy, and yet unbounded sympathy, has never failed her in any of them. Whether they are the old-fashioned secular-minded but upright clerics of the Irwine and Gilfil type, represented in its more modern form by Mr. Gascoigne, or the High Anglican of early Tractarian days like Dr. Kenn, or, as in this story, the fervid Evangelical who was the innovator of a previous period, she is able not only to sympathize herself, but to put her readers in sympathy with each. Only when she is describing a class, not painting a person, does she caricature and lose sympathy, as in the account in *Adam Bede* of Mr. Ryde, Mr. Irwine's successor.

Janet's Repentance occupies a unique position in George Eliot's stories. It is the only one in which religion is really the chief interest. The external aspects of religion, and even more the moral effects

of religious belief, were intensely interesting to her mind. We remember hearing it said by one who had the best right to speak on the subject that her interest in any manifestation of the religious sentiment was such that she would willingly sit for hours in a poor little chapel watching Italian peasants praying to a winking Madonna. But her concern in religion seems to have invariably ceased with its effect on conduct. Of any interest in religious truth for its own sake we find no trace except in *Janet's Repentance*. Even that wonderful and pathetic description of the change wrought in Maggie Tulliver by the *Imitation*, which, as we may now believe, was drawn from her own experience, is only a study of its effect on the development of her character; it is the moral result, the lesson of self-sacrifice, that she dwells upon, not the object of belief, or even the growth of religious knowledge in Maggie's mind. In other books the limitation of view is even more marked, and it increased with time. *Daniel Deronda* has no really religious interest at all, for the Jewish faith is denuded of all that made it a religion, and its moral and national influence is alone considered. In *Middlemarch* Dorothea's religious fervour dies away to nothing, and at no time forms an important element in her character. Even in *Romola*, where it was impossible not to include religious faith among the chief forces which were working on society in Savonarola's time, it is curiously obscured by merely ethical interests; it is pushed aside, even in the character of Savonarola himself, by the purely human elements in his nature. And the great change in Romola's life is caused, as in Maggie's case, by the raising of a moral rather than a religious ideal

before her. To Romola, as to Maggie, religion is presented as the force of self-sacrifice, not as the revelation of an overmastering truth before which the soul must bow; and that is a human and a moral force, not supernatural or, in the truest sense of the word, religious.

But in *Janet's Repentance*, though the central idea, like that of *Romola*, is the influence of one soul upon another, and is so far not strictly a religious idea at all, yet we discern a force, a glow of faith, which is lacking elsewhere. Mr. Tryan's influence is not merely moral, and it is to a certain extent detached from himself; it leads, and is intended to lead, Janet on from a restored faith in her own human nature to a faith in One above human nature. "The act of confiding in human sympathy, the consciousness that a fellow-being was listening to her with patient pity, prepared her soul for that stronger leap by which faith grasps the idea of the Divine sympathy." In the other stories the religious element is a study of the workings of love and faith; but the faith might have any object, the love might spring from any inward principle. But in *Janet's Repentance* it is most definitely faith in Christ that saves her, and she is led by a thorough love for a fellow-creature to love for God. And the result is that in this one story the strict scientific view of human action is given up. We are not bound by the chain of what we have done, if conversion be possible; and Janet's repentance is conversion, while nowhere else in George Eliot's works is its possibility recognized.

Janet's Repentance we would class with *Adam Bede* and *Felix Holt* as being a representation of one great

moral crisis in a life, instead of the whole story of a life or a great portion of it, as in *Romola*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Daniel Deronda*. And in this group, of course, *Adam Bede* stands out unrivalled. In richness of scenery, in fulness of life, in almost intolerable pathos, and in thorough knowledge of the complex system of obscure motives which precedes any important action, this novel has, we imagine, few equals in fiction. The obvious defects cannot really obscure its immense superiority to most other novels. The end of the story is conventional. The so-called "sensational" event of Hetty's reprieve is, indeed, sensational only in the telling, for the circumstance itself is natural enough; but Adam's marriage to Dinah is a conventionality which defaces the clear lines of the whole picture and leaves us with a blurred and indistinct vision of the otherwise wonderful figure of the Methodist saint. And the incidental pictures—the Poyser family's walk to church, the birthday festivities, the harvest home—are numerous enough to impede the progress of the story, which they only illustrate instead of developing. George Eliot never became really skilled in the art of narration; Walter Scott and Dickens would have made each scene, apparently introduced for its historical value or for its humour, contribute something beyond mere background or atmosphere to the whole story. Graver defects are to be found in two of the main characters. Adam himself is, as has often been pointed out, somewhat unreal and stagey; the model working man interests us just as little as any other model, and the recollection of the earlier unreality of the character falls like a shadow on the scenes of tremendous pathos

at the end. Every good person is so much in danger of being called a prig, and the word is so much in want of proper definition, that we will not use it here ; but we may safely, perhaps, call Adam unreal. But Hetty is real, as real as any human being can be without a soul. The fault seems rather to be that her creator is too hard upon her, and betrays in a most unusual manner her want of sympathy with the poor little butterfly being. She betrays it herself, but she does not communicate it to the reader; for we imagine no one has ever ended the book without disappointment at the abrupt dismissal of Hetty from the scene, with no hint that the spiritual and moral consciousness which Dinah brought to life was either further developed or crushed out of her. The unsparing delineation of Hetty's vanity and hard selfishness is, indeed, only one instance of George Eliot's rigorous fidelity to fact; but the careless dismissal and the evident want of interest in the character are peculiar to her treatment of Hetty and of other similar personages in other books. Rosamond and Celia are described in an equally unsympathetic manner, and even with a touch of caricature caused by dwelling exclusively on the unfavourable traits and keeping back or indicating faintly what must have been their redeeming qualities. Hetty has none except her beauty, and in this she exactly resembles Rosamond. Both are wonderful creations, but we are conscious all the time of a certain unfairness in the description, which prevents us from quite sharing the author's feeling about them. In truth, it would seem that the only human character for which George Eliot could feel no sympathy was the pretty, foolish woman who has

no sense of others' needs and sorrows, and knows nothing of the greatness of real love. It would seem so, but that in the great creation of her latest story Gwendolen Harleth shows us how such a soul may be quickened and raised from selfish vanity by the force of bitter experience. But for Hetty there is only the slightest hint of such a process; and the want of it is, we repeat, a real blot upon the book.

These are faults, and they are not unimportant. But the two great excellences in *Adam Bede* which would counter-balance many more faults than these are its abounding life and its deep, overpowering moral reality. Contrasting it with almost any other novel, we are struck at once by the fulness and abundance of the life which it describes, so that after reading it the memory is enriched not with one or two real living characters only, but with a whole country-side of various human beings, moving freely and naturally about the rural scenes, accompanied by all the happy fresh sounds and sights of rural life, and each with his own inward drama and picturesque outward fashion. Men and beasts and scenery alike, all are living and glowing with colour, and the few prominent actors stand out against a background which in its loving fidelity and rich accuracy is unequalled among works of fiction. In this, if in nothing else, George Eliot would have shown her true genius; for, like all genius, she has given us more than we expected, more than we can analyze and explain, more probably than she meant to give. In giving us this impression of abounding movement and life, her book has passed out of the control of her own purpose, for not only the chief personages, but the whole scene exists and

changes in our memories by virtue of its living reality, just as places and people we actually know alter with our moods and change as we look on them because they are real and alive. This we may call the artistic triumph of the book; its practical value consists in the overpowering presentation of the results of ill-doing, the sincerity and reality with which is shown the flimsiness of suggested motives and excuses in the light of the inevitable consequences of action. The moral keynote of the book is given at the very end. "There's a sort of wrong that never can be made up for"; and the vividness and reality with which this is impressed upon us in the character of Arthur Donnithorne give to *Adam Bede* its immense moral force. It is just these generous pleasant characters that are led to fall lightly into sins that deeply injure others; it is so easy for them to imagine reparation. Few passages in literature are more impressive than the description of Arthur's return home after his grandfather's death; and the impression is made by the feelings of overflowing generosity in his heart, his eagerness to "do something for" everyone, and especially for Adam and Hetty, "now it was actually in his power to do a great deal for them," while we know that there is awaiting him the news of the irreparable results of his past action, the inevitable consequence of sin. To know that "there's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for," and that in some degree all wrong is of this sort, is to know one of the deepest lessons of social morality; and it is this knowledge which is burnt into the mind by the awful pathos of *Adam Bede*.

Of *Felix Holt*, which we class with *Adam Bede*, it

is not necessary to say much. It illustrates none of the deeper characteristics of George Eliot, except her inexhaustible dramatic humour; it contains no character that is both natural and interesting, except the beautiful sketch of Rufus Lyon, the Dissenting minister; and therefore the reader's attention is not diverted from the very serious faults in the story itself—the improbable coincidences, the want of harmony between the development of the characters and the circumstances of the story, and the disagreeable nature of the chief incident. These seem to us to account for the comparative failure of the book. She had in writing it a great idea, one of her favourite ideas, the regenerative influence of one human soul on another; just as Mr. Tryan restores Janet, and Daniel Deronda helps Gwendolen to a new life, so she intended Felix to influence Esther. But the characters are not competent to the task of expressing the idea. Felix himself is a failure; and as we never realize his attraction or his power, we have no clue to the change in Esther, which seems to us, therefore, merely external. We believe it because we are told, but no fruitful interest is possible in such a change, and the book can be forgotten with singular ease, because it illustrates and embodies no principle.

In passing to another group of these great novels—the group, namely, of those which deal not with a single crisis in a life, but with the growth or gradual alteration of a whole character—we feel on a higher level as to moral insight. *Romola* and *The Mill on the Floss* are, to our mind, the highest examples of George Eliot's moral teaching, as the latter is the most striking instance of her poetical power. It is, of course, far

easier to be true to nature in painting the revolution of character and the conflict of motives produced by one great crisis, than in tracing the slow changes from one spiritual state to another, the gradual formation of will, and motive, and emotion, that we call character. It is this that she has succeeded in accomplishing with such signal success in these two novels. But in other respects the difference between them is immense. In the one the setting of the story, the scenery in which the moral drama takes place, is her own well-loved English home ; in the other the distance of time and place just takes from the painting of the background that touch of faithful observation and sympathy which gives to her English scenes the charm of pathos and humour. The necessity of the failure of historical novels to reach the highest, or even a respectably high, level of art cannot be more clearly shown than by the instance of *Romola*. That failure is due to the perpetual effort to reconstruct the past by dint of learning, because imagination utterly fails to give the necessary atmosphere to the story, the numberless minute, probably unconscious, touches which combine to make the main action real by putting it in a real setting. It may not be impossible, and perhaps in *Esmond* Thackeray has nearly accomplished it ; but it would be difficult to prove that any other, even Walter Scott, has really surmounted the obstacle. The difficulty consists not in giving a faithful representation of a bygone time, nor in creating living characters with the speech and costume that are historically due to them, but in combining the two, in making the scenery harmonize with the actors, in avoiding the effect of being in two planes of experience at once, in giving to

the surroundings of the story not only interest, but the same interest as the main personages. It is easy to give an historical and antiquarian interest to all the colouring of a tale, but we require something more than this in a work of art; we require, above all, harmony, congruity, perspective. People who have been in Florence, and especially natives of the place, speak with enthusiasm of *Romola*. The fidelity and the local colour and the learning delight them; it is an enchanting guide-book for them, and they find their pleasant impressions and recollections set down and filled out in a manner far beyond them. But look at the book as a work of art, as a creation, and you will be conscious of a discrepancy between the various elements which is fatal to its unity and perfect effect. George Eliot has never, except in *Silas Marner*, altogether avoided this discrepancy; and it may generally be referred to a deeper defect in her works, which will be noticed later; but it is peculiarly apparent in *Romola*. In her English stories the characters and their surroundings are parts of an imaginative whole; they seem never to have existed but in the light and atmosphere, both physical and human, in which they are presented to us. But in *Romola* we are conscious that the two have been pieced together; the moral struggles and falls and conquests of Tito and Romola are present realities and were conceived as such, and then they were deliberately set in an artificial scene which was slowly and carefully prepared and put together to suit the course of the story. To estimate the difference in this respect between *Romola* and the English stories we have only to contrast the stiffness and artificiality of the common gossip of market-place

and street in *Romola* with the pervading humour and naturalness of the incomparable tap-room talk in *Silas Marner*, or the introductory village discussions in *Adam Bede*, or the conversation of Mrs. Dollop and her customers in *Middlemarch*. The difference consists in those two all-important qualities, humour and reality. There is no humour in *Romola*, for George Eliot's humour was the result of observation, not of an imagination that naturally saw everything through a humorous medium. The minor characters of *Romola* are full of wit, just as the writer's own remarks in all her books are witty ; but, like those remarks, they are seldom or never humorous, for they are equally the result of reflection, and humour is hardly ever reflective. This failure in humour is accompanied by a failure in reality and life. The bystanders and spectators in *Romola* have not the distinct individuality of almost every person in *Middlemarch*, or *Adam Bede*, or *The Mill on the Floss* ; for they are generally only types—personages constructed by analysis and thought, not human beings created to live by the author's imagination stimulated by her intimate experience of English life. Really creative power never produces types, but persons, who may or may not be afterwards seen to be representatives of a class, being in the first instance directly perceived by the imagination as wholes. This sense of the unreality of the background in *Romola* never leaves us ; whether it be Bratti, Goro, and the rest, or the more dignified conclaves at the barber's shop, or the supper in the Rucellai gardens, the lifelessness is equally apparent in all, and it is fatal to the artistic perfection of the book.

In a similar way there is an incongruity between

the two main interests in *Romola*. The great, the permanent, achievement is the history of Tito's character, and the contrast between him and Romola, with the influence of each upon the other; and this is a modern interest, directly appealing to our modern feelings, and translated into our modern modes of thought. But George Eliot, attracted perhaps by the fascination of the character expressed in those well-known features which were so strangely like her own, wished to bring Savonarola into her story, and the result is a distressing incongruity. Savonarola is historical, and she can never forget it; Romola and Tito are creations of her imagination, and when they are brought into contact the difference of tone is only too perceptible. We would not deny that by this book Savonarola is brought nearer to us, and that as a separate study of his life and character it would be invaluable; but when placed with the living creations of Tito, Romola, or even Bardo and Tessa, its lifelessness and artificiality are revealed like those of a painted figure on a scene before which living actors are moving.

Nevertheless, nothing can destroy the grand and solemn interest of *Romola*. The want of humour has probably caused its comparative failure as a popular novel; but those who look for teaching from great works of imagination, who wish to know something more of themselves and of other men from the deep and wide observation of great minds, can never forget what a revelation of the possibilities lurking in their own characters the story of Tito was, and what an ideal of noble self-sacrifice the contrasted grandeur of Romola held up to them. We may study many books of maxims, many of the wisest and greatest treatises

of abstract morality, but none speaks to us with such force as the few grave words of Romola's counsel: "Remember, if you were to choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity might come just the same; and it would be calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it"; for this comes to us embodied in the living forms of the man and woman whom this book taught us to know and see as real beings, striving in the moral conflicts that are ours also.

In *The Mill on the Floss* George Eliot seems to us to have reached the highest point of her artistic and moral achievement. In placing it first in artistic merit we are, we believe, diverging from the common judgment on the book, and we must, therefore, justify our estimate. In purely artistic completeness and symmetry, indeed, *Silas Marner* comes first; but the peculiar distinction of *The Mill on the Floss* is the combination of artistic excellence, not so great as that of *Silas Marner*, but still great, with an unequalled moral loftiness and intensity. The ordinary objections to this novel as a work of art are generally of two kinds; the conclusion, it is said, is incongruous and sensational, and Stephen Guest's character is held to be so vulgar and unworthy as to deprive Maggie's love for him of all excuse, because it checks our sympathy for her, and without the maintenance of our sympathy the artistic unity of the book is destroyed.

Now, of these two objections the first does not seem to be very important. The object of the book

is surely to describe not the death of Maggie, but the formation of her character; and therefore the particular mode in which her death is brought about is at most of secondary importance. Our impression of the whole would be very slightly changed were the conclusion far more violent and improbable than it is; for the impression is made by what has gone before, not by the short catastrophe. In all lives death is but an event, and in many a minor event, and perhaps of none could this be more truly said than of Maggie Tulliver. But we will not rest the defence of this incident only on its unimportance; we maintain that it is not incongruous with the rest. It cannot be decided absolutely that some events harmonize with certain conditions and scenes of life, and not with others; our feelings of harmony are relative to our impressions of the scene, not to the scene in itself. Maggie and Tom, to one who has not read the whole story of their lives, might be described shortly as middle-class English folk in very prosaic conditions of life; but the question is, How has the author described them? If we find that the tone and colouring of the book throughout are such as to prepare us for a strange and inevitable catastrophe, that one of the great forces of nature makes, as it were, a background to the scene, conveying an alien impression into the quiet course of English rural life, we cannot say that the conclusion is violent and improbable, but rather consistent and harmonious. That this is done in *The Mill on the Floss* is, of course, a matter of individual opinion and impression; but in our judgment the catastrophe is duly foreshadowed, and is an artistic completion

of the whole. By many slight and scarcely noticed touches the river and its violence in flood time are kept before the mind in a sort of dim underlying consciousness of a force external to all human interests of the narrative, and greater than they. It is this that helps to give the book its poetical character. Like *Silas Marner*, the interest of *The Mill on the Floss* is not to be analyzed and logically laid out; it depends in part upon the atmosphere and colouring of the scene, in part upon the dim anticipations of disaster that haunt the earlier years of the story, such as the often-repeated pathetic doubts of the father as to the future of his too brilliant daughter, and the childish quarrels of Tom and Maggie and their reconciliations in face of trouble. In fact, the whole plan of the book is poetical, for the prefiguring of the struggles and sorrows of life in the beautiful years of childhood is an essentially poetical presentation of the prosaic facts with which fiction must deal. In her other novels we have these facts without any soft medium to transform them; in *Silas Marner* and *The Mill on the Floss* characters and events are seen somewhat as familiar objects are softened and beautified by evening light. There are two chief underlying feelings which affect our perception of the events; namely, the associations of the local scenery, of which the great river is the main feature, and the childish indissoluble connection of brother and sister, which is the foundation of the whole story. It is the union of these two ideas, or rather sentiments, which accompanies the changing fortunes of Tom and Maggie throughout. The children wander along "the great Floss with a sense of travel, to see the

rushing springtide, the awful Eagre, come up like a hungry monster." The home scene is accompanied even in Christmas time by the sound and motion of "the dark river that flowed and moaned like an unresting sorrow." The deepest feeling in Maggie is expressed by her when she says, "The first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss, while he held my hand. Everything before that is dark to me." And it is in true harmony, if not in strict logical connection, with this beginning, and with the course of their joint lives, that they should find their final reconciliation in the waters of the dark river, which had also been the blind means of their final severance. Those who think this end sensational and incongruous have not felt the poetical character of the book, and have missed what to others is its greatest charm.

But Stephen Guest's character is, no doubt, more or less offensive. Still, even in this more important point we should be at no loss to justify the artistic merit of the story, were it not for a suspicion we cannot help feeling that George Eliot's perception, or rather taste, was liable to fail her when she depicted young men, and that she did not intend Stephen Guest to appear quite so vulgar and pretentious an Adonis as we must own that he is. Had he stood alone, there would be no reason to doubt that she meant to paint a man of merely physical attractiveness, in order to emphasize Maggie's weaker side and account for her fall. But in Ladislaw she has drawn a character whom she evidently likes, and wishes her readers to like; and yet we believe that few women and no men can feel any attraction

whatsoever in him. Something of the same failure is felt in Tito and in Daniel Deronda; and we should say that it arises from a tendency to dwell too much upon the appearance and small external details of the young men she describes, till they become almost lay figures or posturing puppets. In the most passionate moments of Dorothea's life we are not allowed to overlook the fact that Ladislaw was "shaking his head backward in his old way," and his hat and gloves are made most inconveniently prominent if we are meant to feel the reality of his nature. So Tito's "dark curls" are too often pressed upon our notice if we are to sympathize with Romola's love for him; and when we are justifiably irritated by Stephen Guest's "white hands" and "well-marked eyebrows," our irritation is increased by our suspicion that George Eliot did not entirely share it, but wished us also to be fascinated by this "long-limbed young man" with the "diamond ring, attar of roses, and air of nonchalant leisure," even as poor Maggie was. If not, her object is plain. She shows us in Maggie a nature compounded of keen sensibilities, verging on sensuousness, strong affections, and lofty ideal morality; the tragedy of her life consists in the inevitable conflict between these "opposing elements;" and while her old home memories and her cultivated spirit of self-denial form the strength of her nobler tendencies, there is yet the lower side of her nature, the physical sensibility which could be excited even by an unworthy object. And the more unworthy Stephen is the more clearly do we see that it is the lower side of Maggie's nature which is attracted by him, and the object of the

book is to portray the conflict between the lower and the higher impulses. Philip's letter gives the true view. "I believed that the strong attraction which drew you together proceeded only from one side of your characters, and belonged to that partial, divided action of our nature which makes half the tragedy of the human lot. I have felt the vibration of chords in your nature that I have continually felt the want of in his."

This, then, is the object of *The Mill on the Floss*: to show how long-repressed passionate impulses may, because they have been unduly repressed, leap out and lay hold of the higher nature and sweep away all original and acquired restraints, and then be conquered, when conquest is hardest, by "memories, and affections, and longings after perfect goodness." Those who blame the book for giving a low view of a woman's power of resistance forget what a resistance is described in it; how Maggie resists not, indeed, the first violence of impulse, but the accumulated force of her own action, the sense of the irreparable which is so often the strongest motive for continuance in wrong-doing, and the consciousness of a lurking power of evil in herself which is far harder to conquer than any external temptations. It is this which makes the moral grandeur of the book. The recoil of the passionate nature from the consequences of its own act, the choice of "the steep and difficult path of a return to the right at the very moment when that return was most of all difficult," and the obedience only to motives of the noblest and sternest self-sacrifice, have created an ideal surely far higher than any picture of resistance to temptation

where the alternative is easy. To Maggie the only alternative was a life of hard, dry wretchedness. And worse than that must have been the uncertainty whether her action would really bring happiness to others, whether her return would not cause great misery to Lucy and Philip. But the lesson of the book is that "we can't choose happiness either for ourselves or for another; we can't tell where that will lie. We can only choose whether we will indulge ourselves in the present moment, or whether we will renounce that for the sake of obeying the Divine voice within us, for the sake of being true to all the motives that sanctify our lives." It seems to us that this is another instance, of a kind even higher than that which is noticed in *Romola*, of the embodying in living figures, and so pressing for ever upon the mind, the loftiest doctrines of abstract morality. Not that Maggie's victory is a reversal of George Eliot's fundamental principle of the "reign of law" in our lives, for it is rather an illustration of it. The victory is obtained by no new principle in her life, but by the force of her past habits of self-sacrifice and the influence of her deeply rooted home affections; so that once again it is made true that

> Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
> And what we have been makes us what we are.

The force by which Maggie fell was the force of her own past action, the deceit of her intercourse with Philip, the passionate susceptibility which she had repressed, not conquered; and the force by which she finally triumphed came also from her past action. "There was at least this fruit from all her years of

striving after the highest and best, that her soul, though betrayed, beguiled, ensnared, could never deliberately consent to a choice of the lower." And so she could say, "There are memories and affections and longings after perfect goodness that have such a strong hold upon me; they would never quit me for long; they would come back and be pain to me—repentance." Thus, again, the last and hardest victory is by the same power. "The light came with the memories that no passion could long quench; the long past came back to her, and with it the fountains of self-renouncing pity and affection, of faithfulness and resolve."

At the height, then, of George Eliot's moral teaching we meet with the same conception of unvarying law that formed the basis of her physical science. There is no escape from the consequences of our actions; there is nothing but a chain of causes and effects beginning with our own wrong-doing. Now, this is no doubt in the main true, and it is good for us to recognize its truth; but it does not exhaust the facts. Conversion is a fact, as well as habit; but, except in that one story in which she was recalling the feelings of the only form of Christianity she ever really believed, there is no sign of anything but habit, broken in upon, perhaps, by the unavailing emotions of sorrow and remorse, but in the sphere of action absolutely dominant. Still, this has its bright side; the chain of habit need not always bind us to evil, and the truest account of such a conflict and such a victory as Maggie Tulliver's is that it is the conflict of the good we have cultivated with the evil we have cultivated, and the good can triumph.

Of *Middlemarch* it is difficult to speak consistently. The immediate impression it leaves upon the mind is one of failure; it would be so even without the disheartening "Prelude," in which George Eliot seems to have concentrated all her vague discontent with our social system. One of the greatest characters in fiction is represented as signally failing in one epoch of her life, and in the other "her full nature spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth." We believe we are speaking for most readers of *Middlemarch* when we say that Dorothea seems to us a wasted ideal, created apparently for the purpose of showing how vain is "spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity," and that the tone of the whole book is depressed, because its leading character is a woman, and therefore one of those whose "ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance and the other condemned as a lapse." And yet we feel, and it is the power of a great genius that makes us feel, what a noble nature is presented to us in Dorothea; we are conscious that though it is "an imperfect social state" in which she struggled, yet her struggles were those of "young and noble impulse." When we are told that "the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive," we do more than accept the writer's word for it; we can imagine it for ourselves; and no novel-reader need be told how rarely it is that we sympathize with a novelist's admiration for his own characters. In Dorothea, George Eliot has added one to the number of fictitious characters who help and strengthen us when we think of them; and the greatness of the

achievement may be estimated by the smallness of that number. But yet failure is the total impression, and the reason seems to be that the main thought of the book, that which alone binds together its very different elements, is the illusoriness of marriage, or at least its utter uncertainty. It is worth noticing here that of all her books only one, *Felix Holt*, is a conventional study of love before marriage; the others, *Romola*, and *Deronda*, and *Middlemarch*, are occupied with married life, and in each of them marriage is represented as illusory. It is impossible for us to come to this subject without having in mind the peculiar circumstances which make it a personal and painful one; it would be possible for us to pass them by in silence were they not well known, and had they not been practically condoned by English society. But we cannot help seeing the close connexion between her books and the facts of her life in this respect, and we cannot help making our protest against both. Of course it will be said her action was consistent with her belief, and therefore not blameworthy, as actions are which are dictated by mere passion in opposition to principle. But surely it is far nobler to maintain beliefs on moral questions in opposition to those of the world, and to preach them, if need be, without acting upon them; while working for a change in the moral beliefs of society, to sacrifice personal preference, lest through actions which are misunderstood the standard of morality be lowered. It is nobler, and it is far more likely to attain its object, than a course which cannot fail to be thought at least impulsive and probably self-indulgent. At all events we are justified in saying that the view of marriage which is perpetually

put forward in her books is an unworthy one, and in *Middlemarch* it is at its lowest. The relation of Dorothea and Casaubon is not so depressing as that of Lydgate and Rosamond. In the former there is at first an ideal, and afterwards willing self-sacrifice; in the latter, mere thoughtless fancy, reaping bitter fruits of disillusion. And Dorothea's second marriage does nothing to raise the ideal of marriage. Ladislaw is such a total failure that, whatever may have been the writer's intention, she cannot justify Dorothea, and the verdict of the reader is very much, in the end, that of Mrs. Cadwallader, if not of Sir James Chettam. This is so much the climax of the book that its futility leaves an impression on the whole; it is not counterbalanced by the beautiful picture of Mary Garth and Fred Vincy. The two characters which might give dignity and do give interest to the story, Dorothea and Lydgate, are both wasted, and they are wasted by marriage.

And there are, of course, several serious artistic faults in *Middlemarch*. The three, or four, or five separate plots are scarcely connected even externally, and the writer never surmounts the difficulties of carrying on so many subjects at once. The tendency to unmixed moralizing had been growing upon her, but in *Middlemarch* it is more predominant, and the moralizing is more abstract than in any previous work, and it does not increase the artistic merit of the story. In fact, her object seems to have been merely to depict character, and therefore it can scarcely be said that there is a story at all. In the one episode which has a beginning, and a middle, and an end, namely, Bulstrode's detection, we are conscious of her invariable inability

to manage sensational events, though the character of the man is one of her most striking studies. And yet, when all is said, *Middlemarch* is a great book. The variety of the characters, the consistency of tone, the assured nobility of some of the personages, especially of Dorothea and Caleb Garth, and above all the rich humour of the subordinate characters, make up a total effect which none but George Eliot could have produced. But the real value of the book as a fruitful element in our experience consists in the character of Dorothea, marred though it is by the disheartening failure of her life.

Those who felt that *Middlemarch* showed George Eliot's discontent, and almost despair, found in *Daniel Deronda* a healthier moral tone, more hopeful and more invigorating. At least we have here an ideal to aim at; life is not all failure. If the Jewish cause is not the highest ideal, if it is, as we have said, stripped of all that could make it really a religion, yet still it is a cause, and an inspiring cause. The idea is a noble one, and in some ways it is grandly worked out; but she does not succeed in making it the real interest of the book; for it remains on the whole an abstract idea, in spite of the author's efforts to embody it in the figures of Daniel and Mordecai. The mass of abstract discussion and reflection is far too great; it cannot be quickened by the emotional force or by the artistic beauty of the book. If Daniel were more of a reality than he is, his belief in his nation and his devotion to their service might have life and reality also; but here, as in *Middlemarch* and *Felix Holt*, the failure in the hero makes the central idea of the book a failure. And this affects not only what she intended

to be, but that which is, in spite of her, the chief interest. Deronda and the Jews are very lifeless and pallid in comparison with Gwendolen; it is on her character, her struggles, her fall, and her repentance that our attention is really fixed. But Gwendolen is so closely connected with Daniel, his influence is so necessary to explain the development of her character, that failure to realize him takes the keystone from the arch, and reduces the plan of the book to chaos. Nevertheless Gwendolen is one of the most profound studies of character in fiction. George Eliot's knowledge of human nature is nowhere more subtle, more unexpected. The whole portrait of the brilliant girl whose flimsy knowledge and shallow vanity combine to drag her into a miserable life is absolutely true and original. Such a touch, for instance, as her excuse for killing her sister's canary, which had jarred her with its singing—she inwardly excused herself "on the ground of a peculiar sensitiveness, which was a mark of her general superiority"—is true not only to nature, but to this particular nature; it is truth not only of observation, but of imagination. To understand the force of the whole conception, compare together the inimitable scene in which Gwendolen consults Klesmer on an artist's vocation and that in which she tells Deronda about Grandcourt's death. The slow bitterness of experience which makes such a change possible is the main interest in *Daniel Deronda*: that is to say, the central figures of the story are Gwendolen and Grandcourt. But Grandcourt, though not to our mind unreal, is only a portrait; he does not change or develop. Gwendolen, on the contrary, is a living creation, and her development is one of

the greatest moral studies in George Eliot's writings. The story teaches us the degradation of a self-centred will; how it falls at first under the hated will of another, and then under the yoke of its own past actions; and that recovery is only possible by unselfishness. "What makes life dreary is the want of motive." It is the failure to apprehend this that drives women like Gwendolen into any escape from the fancied dreariness of a life that an unselfish motive would gladden and brighten. We may sum up the lesson of *Daniel Deronda* in the words of her own noble poem; it teaches us

> Scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self.

Wordsworth said of Shakspeare that he could not have written an epic, for he would have died of a plethora of thought. He was thinking of the Venus and Adonis when he said this; and the remark comes back to us in reading George Eliot's poems. They are dead of a plethora of thought. A true poet knows instinctively the right proportion between the raw material of poetry and the manufactured product, which is the combination of form and matter. The *Spanish Gypsy* is the raw material of poetry, not a poem. Open it where you will, and you will find thoughts and images enough to make ten poems, but also enough to ruin one. There is no repose in it, and therefore there is no swift progress; we are perpetually turning aside from the object, because the writer wants us to look at something else. Poetry should be instinctively right and never self-conscious; but George Eliot never loses her self-consciousness, except when it is over-

powered by her dramatic feeling. Her humour fails and shrivels into wit when she speaks in her own character; her taste is not sure; she lapses into bathos at times, except when she is guided by her imaginative idea of some living person. If, then, it is true to say of Shakspeare that in an epic his sense of proportion would have failed him, it means that his instinct depended upon his dramatic imagination; for in his plays there is little or no "plethora of thought." And in this he resembles George Eliot. But she lacked, further, the poet's indispensable gift, the power of song. What one feels in reading the *Spanish Gypsy* is that it would have been better in prose; there is no music in it. The lyrics halt, and so die out of the memory, except, perhaps, that tiny gem "Push off the boat." And the blank verse has no better fate; it is clogged with thought, it dies of self-consciousness. We have not here the real George Eliot, for she lives in her created characters, where she forgets herself, and is guided by the dramatist's instinct to express her deepest moral convictions in the objective forms of living persons. We may, then, leave her poems, certain that we have all that is permanently valuable of her in her novels.

How, then, can we sum up the result of this survey of her writings, the total gain to our literature from her work? It consists, surely, in those two qualities which she has shown in such varied forms—sympathy and moral force. George Eliot was not a perfect writer. Her defects, however, seem to us chiefly artistic, and may mostly, perhaps, be included in the one serious fault of laboriousness. At least her failure to manage her plots is often due to just that habit

of over-describing which spoils at times her painting of character. The accumulation of external details checks the narrative, just as it makes us lose sight of the great governing principles of character in men like Ladislaw, or Felix Holt, or Deronda. "Finish" there is to excess; but because of the finish we rarely get impulse and motion. Her stories glide slowly on, and then have to be hurried to an end, with a want of proportion and outline which deprives them of much of their artistic charm. But a more serious, because a more material, defect than this is the want of harmony between her foremost characters and the setting in which they are placed. There are generally two stories at least in her books, and the one is not much affected by the other. One is the narrative of the chief personages, their struggles and their moral difficulties; the other is the more external painting of the society which surrounds them, its peculiarities and fashions. Maggie and Tom, Romola and Tito, Dorothea and Ladislaw, Adam and Arthur and Hetty, work on each other's lives and affect each other deeply; but we are not shown the effect of society upon them; we are not made to understand the subtle influences which time and place really have upon even the most peculiar characters, because the characters and their conditions are in fact conceived in different ways. Her stories are fixed and unchanging pictures of former society on the one hand, and on the other dramas of individual character, changing and developing by its own actions, and by the actions of a few other leading characters. Only in *Silas Marner* does she seem altogether to have avoided this defect; but only in *Romola* is it so marked as really to destroy the artistic

unity of the book. In the others we are conscious indeed that many scenes are introduced rather for the sake of describing the society in which the personages carried on their inward drama than for the influence which that society had upon the personages. The aunts in *The Mill on the Floss*, Mrs. Poyser and Bartle Massey and the others in *Adam Bede*, Mrs. Cadwallader and Sir James Chettam, have their set interludes, but the connexion between them and the real interest of the stories is somewhat artificial. Still we lose this feeling in the enjoyment of the subtle truth and humour of the scenes themselves; only when, as in *Romola*, the setting itself is artificial and lifeless, does the discrepancy become a really serious fault.

But we have to look closely to see this and other defects in George Eliot's work, while the splendid genius is visible in every page. It is her abundant sympathy that makes the characters so real to us; sympathy with the vulgar and insignificant, sympathy with the vile and criminal, keeps her subordinate personages from being mere types, and makes us realize the life that was in them. This inspires her rich humour, for real humour is impossible without a sense of fellowship with the incongruous and imperfect mortals laughed at. So that, perhaps, we should place as her greatest achievement the various studies of commonplace men and women with which her books are full. It is not only in portrait, but in analysis also, that her astonishing knowledge of the obscure movements of mediocre minds is shown. We would instance that wonderful account, in *The Mill on the Floss*, of Mr. Riley's motives for recommending Mr.

Stelling as a schoolmaster. Most of us can feel the force of it, for most of us, like Mr. Riley, are "more under the influence of small promptings than of far-sighted designs," but perhaps they had never been made so clear to us before.

It is this sympathy combined with her moral intensity that gives her books their great moral value. For they enable us to judge of men and actions as they ought to be judged; by showing us the complexity of motives, the obscurity of real designs, the rapidity of temptation, we are forced to sympathize with the men who do wrong and foolish things; the point of departure from the normal line of conduct is made so clear, and yet it is shown to be so imperceptible at the time, that we can but feel how easy for us at all times such a departure would be. But then the acts themselves, and their incalculable, inevitable results are depicted with such terrible insistence and accuracy, that one rises from a novel of George Eliot's with a totally new conviction of the importance of life, and the certainty of judgment. They make us love men more, for they bind closer the human fellowship, and force us to realize our common nature; but they make us hate sin more, for they show us our deeds as something apart from ourselves, with an independent life for which we, however, are responsible. That nothing breaks in upon this awful chain of consequence, that the deed once done must live and work for ever, that habits once formed are character, is her philosophy of life. Had she been able to complete it by a philosophy of religion, by a sense of the possibility, rare indeed, and not to be reckoned upon, but still a possibility, of sudden and complete change, the rush

of a new and overpowering life into the old captivity of habit, she would have been greater, because truer. We take our stand upon facts when we believe in conversion. But even conversion only changes our own lives; it cannot change what we have done to others, it cannot recall the deeds that have gone from us into the immeasurable sum of causes. So we return to the truth which George Eliot had to deliver, the truth by which she has bound together the varied forms of her experience, and redeemed from the toleration of indifference her universal sympathy:

> Deeds are the pulse of Time, his beating life,
> And righteous or unrighteous, being done,
> Must throb in after-throbs till Time itself
> Be laid in stillness, and the universe
> Quiver and breathe upon no mirror more.

MODERN PAGAN POETRY.[1]

BY paganism in poetry, as in other things, we wish to express that mode of thought which is too positive to be called merely infidel or agnostic or atheist, too negative to be called pantheist or positivist. Its relation to religion is something like that of a bull to a red rag: in general, it is unconscious of it and independent; its life is not ordinarily affected by it; but when something calls its attention to it, it becomes furiously hostile, almost insane. The pagans of modern times try with some measure of success to return to the old pre-Christian life and way of thinking; they endeavour to live in the present, not, as the agnostic or the secularist would say, because we can know nothing of God or of the other world, but simply because the present is, or seems to be, good and enjoyable, and they wish to enjoy what is good. But the dark shadow of eighteen centuries of religion is upon them, and whenever they see it they betray by their unhappiness or their rage that, after all, they can only share the pagan denial of Heaven, not the pagan satisfaction with this world. We wish to discuss the writings of the poet who seems to be the chief representative of this pagan element of thought or emotion in our day, and also, by way of contrast, to notice a remarkable writer who lived to a great extent unknown,

[1] Written in 1882.

and has died just as he seemed about to become famous. There are two clearly distinguished schools of modern paganism, the hopeful and the despairing; and, as representatives of these, though there can be no question as to poetical superiority, we will take Mr. Swinburne and Mr. James Thomson.

Mr. Swinburne is at the head of that class of English poets who seem to have taken for their motto, *Ars est ostentare artem.* Widely as they differ in every other respect, they have the common quality of giving prominence to the form and manner of poetry, rather than to the matter and meaning of it. Now, there are several difficulties which impede us in judging such poetry. In the first place we must beware of mistaking one kind of pleasure for another. Because we get from Mr. Swinburne or Mr. Rossetti the undoubted pleasure of melodious rhythm and ingenious arrangements of sounds, we must not forget that this is not the only pleasure that poetry has to afford. To give delight by a sudden revelation of unsuspected beauty is the higher function of poetry, though this must be conveyed in the long-consecrated forms of rhythmical verse. In the second place we must beware of accepting without reserve the judgment of critics who are themselves poets. They are apt, and naturally so, to dwell on the mechanism of verse, on its mere form, and to study with interest and favour any poet who displays great mastery over form, regardless of the subject-matter of which he writes. In these technical points they recognize their own special difficulties, and they have undergone for these a special training. The matter of their works is personal and singular to themselves, the form and manner and technical rules

are common to all artists, and can be criticized by appeal to common laws. And such criticism is most useful, and worthy of study by all. But it does not exhaust the facts, and it often tends to elevate unduly the "artistic" writers. It does not follow that a poet who is greatly praised by poets will be liked by the mass of readers; nor does it follow that the mass of readers is wrong. Posterity is the sole judge of right and wrong in art, and "posterity" will consist not of poets, but of readers of poetry. To anticipate, therefore, the final verdict upon any poems, we must look beyond the favourable opinion of poets, who in judging other men's writings are chiefly interested in the technical mechanism of verse, and consider what the poems are to those who look in poetry for a worthy combination of sound and sense, for deep and beautiful thoughts embodied, not merely clothed, in lovely and harmonious forms.

We do not wish to raise again the weary dispute as to form and matter in art, for we will concede that form is indispensable. We will go further, and for the sake of argument concede that any matter will serve for poetry, and that it is the form alone which constitutes a poem; but then, what is form? Surely it is the adaptation of expression to that which is expressed, so that a thought, a purely intellectual thing, becomes an image, and gains access to the mind by the various channels of sense and emotion and imagination. Verse and painting and sculpture make thought sensuous; but sensuousness alone will not serve for art without the thought. Now it is this absence of thought, of matter, that turns much of our modern art into artificiality; the poet's mind, having no object

before it, works upon the form alone, and is conscious only of that. The result is that we have lost even the emotional power which perfect form produces, and much of the verse that is now written leaves us as cold and unmoved as if we were reading the "metaphysical" poets of the seventeenth century, or the complicated ingenuities of mediæval monks.

Mr. Swinburne, more than most contemporary poets, shows this defect of artificiality, of self-conscious form; though, at the same time, more than others he redeems his verse by genuine fire and vigour. He seems to have mistaken the means that should be unconsciously chosen for the end that a poet should consciously set before him. He has made too much of the mere tricks of the craft, those secrets of alliteration and accent which Mr. Myers has so well described in his monograph on Wordsworth; but in so doing he has forgotten what Mr. Myers says in conclusion: "What the poet's brain does not do consciously it does unconsciously; a selective action is going on in its recesses simultaneously with the overt train of thought, and on the degree of this unconscious suggestiveness the richness and melody of the poetry will depend." It is because this mechanism is unconscious that the truest poetry can blend form and matter so perfectly; the poet's mind, fixed on its proper object, the thought, or the image, or the feeling, is stirred at last with the requisite emotion, and harassed by no doubts as to rhythm and cadence, vexed by no hesitation or slow selection, pours forth the harmonious whole, the poem. Let us by all means avoid one-sidedness in these matters; let us acknowledge the absolute necessity of form in art, but let us also own that form

is not form when it hides the matter it should embody.

In Mr. Swinburne's lyrics, to which we will confine ourselves, the chief excellence, we should say, is the sense of splendid motion that he conveys by his verse. This is a quality that hardly ever deserts him. In his sonnets, indeed, and in other strictly regulated forms of verse, and in some later rather unfortunate attempts in metre and rhythm, we do not feel ourselves carried forward with the rush and impetuosity of movement that no one can resist in his more characteristic lyrics. But in these, even when his artificiality is most prominent, when his rhymes and alliterations are little short of audacious, the motion as of a great tide lifts us and carries us almost beyond the power of criticizing. For instance:

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land-waster,
For all thine haste, or
  Thy stormy skill,
Yet hadst thou never.
  For all endeavour,
Strength to dissever
  Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
  What ours fulfil;
Whose feet tread under
The storms and thunder;
Who made our wonder to work His will.

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,
His stars and flowers,
  His nights and days,

Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
  Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing;
Time in its going,
  While time shall be;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise Him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

No one can deny the power here, and it is a power which is rare among modern poets, who are in general too self-conscious to be impetuous, too nice and careful in selecting their words to move swiftly and strongly. It is not for nothing that Mr. Swinburne can say:

The sea-wind and the sea
Made all my soul in me
  A song for ever;

for his poetry is endowed with much of the onward rush of tidal waves, even though very often it may have nothing but the mere motion and ceaseless sound of the "unfruitful sea." His peculiar excellence among poets is the combination of great ingenuity in the choice and disposal of words, and in the construction of his verses with a "swing" and fire and motion that are among the highest qualities of poetry.

The rhythm of verse is one thing, the sound is another. If we may use a musical illustration, we should call the first the melody of a poem, the other its harmony. But musical metaphors have done great harm in poetical criticism, and we do not wish to be led astray by them. The sound of verses is so far harmony that it depends upon the combination of

mere syllables with each other, without much regard to the rhythm of the lines. In any more definite sense, it is not harmony, and cannot be. Now, everyone must own the richness and fulness of the sound of Mr. Swinburne's verses. We may open the volumes at random, and we shall find no line that jars by harshness, or disappoints by thinness of sound; the combination is always full, always rich and sweet. It would be an interesting study in the mechanism of poetry, the sounds and the rhythm and the ingenuity of language, to analyze, for instance, the verses called *Evening on the Broads*, so as to understand the poet's wonderful skill:

Over two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,
  Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awhile on the sterile
  Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the night.
Inland glimmer the shallows asleep and afar in the breathless
  Twilight: yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.

It is not given to the English language to emulate the full-sounding beauty of Greek or Italian, but in such lines as these Mr. Swinburne goes nearer to the unattainable than any poet of ours, except Milton.

But richness of sound and rhythmical movement are not the only qualities that the finest verse ought to have; there are others, in which, in our opinion, Mr. Swinburne is strangely deficient. Though we have employed a musical metaphor to describe his beauty of sound, yet the whole effect of his verse is not musical. It is very difficult to explain one's meaning in this matter, for it is a question to a great extent of personal tastes, of peculiarities of ear, and perhaps of memory. But there is a test which seems

to prove that it is not only a personal want of appreciation that leads us to deny to Mr. Swinburne the highest quality of song, but something apparent to all, and therefore a real defect in his poems. The test is popular quotation. Lines are quoted when, by some indefinable charm of language that fits the thought, they have fixed themselves in men's memories; and the charm seems to consist partly in this, that the words are inevitable: they seem to be the only possible expression of the thought, and come to us, to use Coleridge's beautiful image for the stars, with a feeling of recognition, rather than discovery, "like lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival." Just as in music each note and chord is led up to by its predecessors, and seems to be inevitable, so in the highest lyric poetry, which is, therefore, most truly musical, each word brings with it a sense of fulfilment, as of a want satisfied. Now, Mr. Swinburne's poems are hardly ever quoted. It is not unfair to expect this proof of popular appreciation from such comparatively modern poems. Many of his works have been published quite long enough to haunt men's minds, had they the necessary charm and cadence. But while numberless lines of Tennyson, many of Matthew Arnold, some of Browning, in spite of his difficulty, dwell in the memory, and rise to the lips almost unconsciously, we doubt whether many, even of the professed students of poetry, are often haunted by the sound of Mr. Swinburne's verses, beautiful though they undoubtedly are. And the reason is that, though they have richness, they lack music. Indeed, their richness is partly the cause of their want of music, for the quality we are trying to

describe, the quality of lines such as the *Gather ye roses* of Herrick, or *Take, O take, those lips away*, or Shelley's *Music when soft voices die*, depends to a great extent upon their purity, not to call it simplicity. In Mr. Swinburne's poetry the language is ornate and involved, and heavy with sound, if not with meaning ; each word seems chosen for itself, and has an independent value, and the whole line or poem becomes clogged and over-loaded ; the attention is distracted from the whole, and is delayed upon each separate point of colour. In spite of the freedom and motion of the rhythm, there is so much laboriousness in the details that there is an utter loss of the sense of satisfaction, and the words are there because he put them there, and we know why he put them there, not because they are the only words that could be there. And this want of musical quality is a very serious defect, if, as we hold, it keeps poetry out of men's memories ; for as the giving of pleasure is at least one chief end of poetry, and there is no pleasure to be derived from reading equal to that of remembering verses, it would seem that this defect robs a poet of much of the power of attraction he might otherwise exercise.

This defect is, of course, intensified by Mr. Swinburne's looseness and vagueness of structure, both in particular sentences and in whole poems. The chief, or at least the first, impression that is left on the mind by Mr. Swinburne's prose is surprise at the inability of a poet to keep his sentences within the limits of intelligible form ; but in poetry, at least, we expect clearness and definiteness of structure and outline. Mr. Swinburne, however, is so often overwhelmed with

his own thoughts, and finds it unfortunately so easy to express in a parenthesis or a relative clause everything that he thinks, that even in his lyrics the structure is ungainly and straggling; while as to his plays—we are oppressed with the memory of one passage in *Erechtheus* that rushes on for more than sixty lines without a full stop. Passages such as this from the *Studies in Song* might be quoted in great number, and they seem to us clearly to violate the laws of structure, so involved and interminably parenthetical are they:

> More fair than all things born and slain of fate,
> More glorious than all births of days and nights,
> He bade the spirit of man regenerate,
> Rekindling, rise and reassume the rights
> That in high seasons of his old estate
> Clothed him and armed with majesties and mights
> Heroic, when the times and hearts were great
> And in the depths of ages rose the heights
> Radiant of high deeds done
> And souls that matched the sun
> For splendour with the lightnings of their lights
> Whence even their uttered names
> Burn like the strong twin flames
> Of song that shakes a throne and steel that smites;
> As on Thermopylæ when shone
> Leonidas, on Syracuse Timoleon.

This incoherence in particular sentences results in a similar want of compactness in whole poems. Where Mr. Swinburne chooses to bind himself by the strict laws of the sonnet or the ballade or the sestina, he is, of course, compelled to bring his lines to an end; but in his unfettered poems there really seems no reason why he should stop at one stanza, or at one ringing verse, more than at another. For instance, the very fine poem called *In the Bay* consists of forty

stanzas ; but there is no growth, no climax, no organic unity of structure ; each stanza is splendid in itself, but it does not lead on to the next ; it bears no intelligible relation to the whole, and the poet leaves off apparently for no reason but that there are other subjects than Marlowe and Shelley on which to spend the labour of pouring forth sounding sentences. That this incoherence is a natural defect in Mr. Swinburne's genius seems to be proved by the fact that he is least successful in his sonnets and ballades and other artificially limited forms of verse. They are ingenious, but they lack the movement and rush of his greater lyrics and, being deficient, as are all his poems, in nervous force and condensed vigour, they have hardly any poetical *raison d'être.* Take, for example, any of Mr. Swinburne's diatribes in sonnet form against the Czar, or that intricate failure *A Ballad of François Villon*, and his weakness when prevented from acquiring force by prolonged motion will be apparent. In other words, Mr. Swinburne's genius to a great extent depends upon his incoherence, and when he is obliged to be concise he loses his strength.

Sometimes, indeed, Mr. Swinburne, like every other real poet, breaks away from our easy generalizations, and contradicts our formulæ by some great anomaly in his work. Sometimes he is restrained and classical, clear in outline, pure in tone. Even in his earliest volume of lyrics, there were the beautiful lines to the memory of Walter Savage Landor :

> In many a tender wheaten plot
> Flowers that were dead
> Live, and old suns revive ; but not
> That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year:

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be prest
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

The whole short poem, of which these stanzas are a worthy specimen, is a model of tender grace and dignified reverence, in spite of some characteristic exaggeration of praise. It is generally the feeling of friendship that moves Mr. Swinburne to write in this pure and lofty style; his elegies have a certain note which we miss from his other poems, even from the odes in which he seeks to commemorate the lives of those whose deaths he has mourned in simpler and more truly poetical tones. Few of his poems are more beautiful than those dedicated, in his second series of *Poems and Ballads*, to the memory of his father and of Barry Cornwall, though they have not the perfect restraint of the lines we quoted last. Still, such stanzas as this are genuine and fine poetry:

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and famous,
To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of death;
But the flower of their souls he shall not take away to shame us,
Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack breath.
For with us shall the music and perfume that die not dwell,
Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we farewell.

But, on the whole, though we admit Mr. Swinburne's

truly poetical genius, though we have pointed out his special excellence as a poet, viz. the combination of movement with ingenuity, we must own that much of his work seems to us not poetry, but rhetoric. M. Schérer has distinguished eloquence, with which he holds rhetoric to be synonymous, from poetry, in his criticism of M. Taine's high estimate of Byron: "L'éloquence est le discours servant d'expression à l'émotion personnelle; infiniment plus variée et plus désintéressée, la poésie est la manifestation au moyen du langage de cet élément du beau qui est en toute chose, et qu'il s'agit d'y sentir et d'en dégager." And he goes on to point out that French poets have always had a great tendency to be mere rhetoricians: "Nous ne savons pas sortir de nous-mêmes pour nous livrer à la puissance propre de l'objet." Now, here M. Schérer has, we think, been misled, by his attention to his particular subject, Byron, into an undue limitation of his definition of eloquence, or rhetoric, or oratory. Poetry also may deal, and deal splendidly, with personal emotion; so that this cannot be the special quality of rhetoric. Byron was perhaps a rhetorician, and he was certainly an egotist, but that does not prove that rhetoric is egotism, or that egotism is rhetoric. Accepting M. Schérer's definition of poetry, is not eloquence distinguished from it by this fact, that while poetry has always one and one only object, the "element of beauty which is in everything," eloquence may be used as an instrument for any purpose, it may set before it any object? A certain conviction and fire of emotion communicable to others by means of a potent command over language is eloquence: rhetoric, again, is mere mastery of language unaccompanied by conviction or

emotion. Poetry is neither of these; though much that is called poetry is eloquence, and much, as for example the mechanical poems of the eighteenth century, is nothing but rhetoric. Poetry must always deal with that which we call beauty, or truth, or the secret of nature, or the interpretation of life; this the poet has to seek for, to feel, and to seize. It is this that gives poetry that accent of high sincerity which Mr. Matthew Arnold has so well illustrated; for this is an object which holds the mind so that it cannot be thinking of itself or of its mode of expression, still less of its audience. The poet sees the truth, and then the expression follows, pure and glowing with sincerity. Now, in Mr. Swinburne's poems we find a wonderful mastery of language, considerable earnestness and conviction, at the service of any subject that may happen to present itself. There is the instrument, the eloquence, the rush of words, the pile of imagery, the wealth of epithets; but where is the truth, the beauty, the secret that the poet is to declare for us with all this apparatus? It is nowhere; he has seen nothing, and heard nothing, so he must write "about it and about it," and dress out his meagre material with the richest covering of gorgeous phrases: and this is eloquence, sometimes, perhaps, only rhetoric, but not poetry.

We do not wish to be misunderstood. Mr. Swinburne is not always merely eloquent, for, as we have said, he is a true poet. Sometimes he is able to make us see some truth of life, some hidden aspect of things; and then he is sincere, and simple, and strong. This occurs oftenest, we should say, when he is giving expression to the pagan sentiment, especially in its

antagonism to Christianity. Whatever we may think of the truth or the excellence of paganism, still it is undoubtedly a living thing, a fact; and it is well that we should be made to feel it, and even, to a certain extent, to sympathize with it. And such a poem as *The Garden of Proserpine* enables us to understand the pagan horizon, the pagan satisfaction with this world, the pagan weariness, and contentment that life should end in annihilation; and it does this by the force and sincerity of its tone. Mr. Swinburne is great in such a passage as this:

> From too much love of living,
> From hope and fear set free,
> We thank with brief thanksgiving
> Whatever gods may be
> That no life lives for ever;
> That dead men rise up never;
> That even the weariest river
> Winds somewhere safe to sea.

For that gives us, by its indefinable sound of truth, an insight into the souls of the men whom he represents, which it is well for us to have, and right that he should give, if he feels as they felt.

But his numerous odes, sonnets, and ejaculations to Victor Hugo, his political manifestoes, his philosophical and religious poems, are all stamped with the mark of rhetoric; even conviction is, at times, absent from them, and the writer seems to be lashing himself up by the mere sound of his verses into an unreal passion of admiration or of hate. Not that we believe that Mr. Swinburne is insincere in his professions of faith, but that his feeling is not really equal to what he says of it; the object is not clearly present to him, and he therefore utterly fails to make us see it, or even to

see that he sees it. The *Birthday Ode to Victor Hugo* and the *Song for the Centenary of Landor* are instances of this overwrought enthusiasm ; they leave us cold, unconvinced, and doubtful whether even Mr. Swinburne knows exactly what it is that he admires. Such poems, in fact, are not even eloquent, for they fail to communicate the speaker's emotion to others ; they are merely rhetorical. It is not, therefore, strange that Mr. Swinburne should have so great an admiration for French poets in general, and for Victor Hugo in particular ; for as M. Schérer says, this oratorical tone is a special defect of French poetry, and Victor Hugo is certainly not the least addicted to it. And fine though it may be of its kind, and satisfying to the mind in certain phases of feeling, it is not the highest poetry, and very often it is not poetry at all, but gorgeous declamation, useful for its special object, but not durable, for it does not permanently rouse, and purify, and elevate, nor will it, therefore, permanently delight.

We have been led on to anticipate something of what we have still to say of Mr. Swinburne's poems. We have studied his form with its good and bad qualities : we have now to turn to his matter, the thoughts that move him to poetical utterance. It is not easy to disentangle Mr. Swinburne's meaning from the complicated shroud of words in which he clothes it, nor is it always worth the trouble. Still, there are certain subjects to which he is continually recurring, and on these he has, or seems to have, definite and discoverable opinions. Nature, love, politics, religion, form the staple of his writings ; let us see what he has to teach the world on these subjects.

The interpretation of nature is a worthy object of poetry : it is not the sole object, and indeed it is only in modern times that poets or painters have dealt with nature for herself alone, and not as a mere background to human action and emotion. But we find in Mr. Swinburne neither insight into nature's secrets nor a harmonious power of combining the outer world with man's feelings. We have no flashes of sympathetic imagination, no results of a loving meditation on the sights and sounds of the world, such as not only Wordsworth but nearly all poets have given us ; he does not teach us to see more, or to love more what we do see. He seldom enriches us with a perception of the relation between our life and the life of the world ; we do not find ourselves recalling lines of his when any natural sight is brought before us. He is, indeed, prodigal of references to nature, and few of his poems are without an abundance of epithets and images drawn from the outer world. But in general it is an oratorical use that he makes of them ; they are introduced more as figures of speech than as real images which the poet has seen, and in which his thoughts are naturally embodied. The same objects recur over and over again in his poems, and they often seem to us to be brought in more for their sound than for their imagery. "Roses," for instance, is a beautiful sound at the end of a line, so Mr. Swinburne gives us many melodious verses about roses, which never yet tell us anything we did not all know before, and never associate the rose with a fresh emotion. The natural imagery of his poems is not accurate, and it would be commonplace and conventional were it not redeemed by the never-

failing beauty of the sound and rhythm into which he works it. In general it is only for the large obvious phenomena of nature that he has an eye; when he attempts to look more closely he fails, sometimes ludicrously, as in his tender apostrophe to the sundew, which happens to be one of the greediest of the insectivorous plants:—

> You call it sundew: how it grows,
> If with its colour it have breath,
> If life taste sweet to it, if death
> Pain its soft petal, no man knows:
> Man has no sight or sense that saith.

Such poetical adaptations of nature as this are wanting in the primary essential of truth; they are not imaginative, but only rhetorical.

We must make one important exception, however, to this account of Mr. Swinburne's dealings with nature. When he speaks of the sea, of the winds that move it, of the sun that lightens it, of the plants that grow in it, of its motion, its sound, and its breath, we feel we are listening to a poet who sees and hears what he is describing. And this is especially the case when he speaks of the desolation of the sea, and the ruin it brings to the land. *By the North Sea*, *A Forsaken Garden*, *Evening on the Broads*, are instances of the great power with which Mr. Swinburne can describe the broad majestic changes of sea and sky, and the decay and death that prevail on the sea-shore. In *By the North Sea*, the dreary "land of utter death," where the sea is washing away the graves with "bare white piteous bones protruded," is suddenly and vividly, to eye and ear, contrasted with the luminous splendour of the sea:

But afar on the headland exalted,
  But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted
  Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
  For deathless and ageless is he;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
    His sandal the sea.

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
  And her green floor glitters with fire,
The sea has the sun for a harper,
  The sun has the sea for a lyre.
The waves are a pavement of amber,
  By the feet of the sea-winds trod
To receive in a god's presence-chamber
    Our father, the God.

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
  Is master and God of the land:
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
  That is shed from our lord's right hand.
O father of all of us ever,
  All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never,
    And earth and the sea.

This is a good instance of Mr. Swinburne's treatment of the one set of phenomena that he can speak of with sympathy and truth; but even in his sea-poems we want at times more simplicity, less sound, and more clearness of outline: we want to see the waves, not only to hear them. In this one stanza of Clough's there is more of the sea brought before our eyes than in hundreds of Mr. Swinburne's rolling lines:—

For while the tired waves vainly breaking,
  Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
  Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

Of Mr. Swinburne's treatment of love there is no need to say much. It may be unfair to bring against him the youthful animalism of the first *Poems and Ballads*, for he has never returned to it. But he has never retracted it, and the poems are still published. This makes it impossible for us to avoid a fresh protest against the revolting and studied sensuality that ruined even the wonderful melody of his earliest lyrics. Nothing more corrupted and corrupting has been written, at least in our century and by one of our countrymen; and though since that time he has not written much of love, yet even in his few later utterances on the subject there is nothing lofty, nothing really pure: love is still for him mere animal passion, and can be but a transitory emotion:

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us:
Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us;
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;
Love can but last in us here at his height
For a day and a night.

Indeed, it is his earliest volume that contains the only worthy expression of the depth and height of love, and makes us feel that it has in it something more than a temporary physical emotion. In the splendid stanzas entitled *The Triumph of Time* Mr. Swinburne has, we should say, almost consciously imitated Mr. Browning; he is simpler in language, deeper in thought, more sincere in tone and feeling than in his other poems on the subject:

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.
Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,
This wild new growth of the corn and the vine,

This wine and bread without lees or leaven,
We had grown as gods, as the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things,
In the clamour and rumour of life to be,
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,
Covered with love as a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,
O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean.
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast
Soul to soul while the years fell past;
Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
Had the chance been with us that has not been.

But this comparatively fine treatment of love is distinctly an exception. In general he is sensual, thin, and unintellectual, not to speak of the graver want of purity and reverence, when he writes of love.

In his later poems the main subject has been freedom, and his most fervid utterances have been produced by the supposed triumphs or defeats of the cause of freedom in various nations, especially in France and and Italy. Mr. Swinburne, when he deals with freedom, or, indeed, with any political subject, speaks so much in the Continental manner that it is difficult for English readers to sympathize with him, or even to understand him. We believe, though by the way Mr. Swinburne does not, that we in England have got a

sufficient share of freedom, and that we have known for a long time what liberty means. But we hardly know the meaning of such a saying as this from *Thalassius* :

> Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
> Which, if man had not, then should God not be;
> And that was Liberty.

That is our fault, Mr. Swinburne would probably say, and perhaps it is. But then this defect in us will partly account for a feeling of unreality that comes over us when reading Mr. Swinburne's apostrophes to freedom, or his unlimited abuse of kings and priests, who are, he says, invariably enemies of freedom. It is all so abstract and intangible ; it bears so little relation to the real lives, the real wants, and joys, and sorrows of men, that the poet's devotion to it cannot but sound to us forced and fruitless. Mr. Swinburne comes nearer to the concrete and the real in *Christmas Antiphones* than in any other poem ; for here the poor and oppressed people declare their sufferings with more or less definiteness :

> We whose mind is blind,
> Fed with hope of nought ;
> Wastes of worn mankind,
> Without heart or mind,
> Without meat or thought ;
>
> We with strife of life
> Worn till all life cease,
> Want, a whetted knife,
> Sharpening strife on strife,
> How should we love peace ?

But what has the poet got to offer as a remedy for this evil ?

Man shall do for you,
Men the sons of man,
What no God would do
That they sought unto
While the blind years ran.

Brotherhood of good,
Equal laws and rights,
Freedom whose sweet food
Feeds the multitude
All their days and nights,
With the bread full-fed
Of her body blest.

And then Mr. Swinburne goes on with one of his favourite and unpleasing analogies between sacred and political things, which throw no light on anything but his own unworthiness to speak of religious subjects. Now, we cannot fairly expect from a poet clearly defined remedies for political and social evils, but we may be excused for finding such passages as this empty, and vague, and unsatisfying. The mere abstraction freedom can do nothing to diminish the undoubted wrongs and sufferings of the people, and those who feel these things most deeply, and who are striving to remedy them, may well be impatient of the shallow verbiage of many of Mr. Swinburne's declamations. We would not deny the force and fire which animate poems such as *A Marching Song*, *A Song in Time of Order*, *The Halt before Rome*, and many others; nor would we seem to deprecate the value of an ideal, even when it is a mere abstraction, remote from the real feeling of men. But poetry must be more than rhetoric—truth is more than conventionality; and in Mr. Swinburne's political poems the force is seldom more than the rhetorical force of an artificial

emotion, and the message is a conventional catch-word proclaimed in diverse tones with no genuine sound of truth in them.

Lastly, we come to Mr. Swinburne's religion. Two things make it difficult and unpleasant to analyze his religious sentiments. The first is his liking for sacred imagery applied to all sorts of subjects, as, for instance, in *Before a Crucifix*, *Christmas Antiphones*, or *After Nine Years*; and the second is his allied peculiarity of adopting Biblical, and especially Old Testament, phraseology. He often seems to be speaking of religious subjects when in reality the religious language or imagery is metaphorical, and the subject is merely political or personal. This may sometimes serve as an excuse for what seems at first sight unspeakable and inexplicable blasphemy: as for example in some of the sonnets in *Songs of Two Nations*. We call it blasphemy, for though Mr. Swinburne professes to disbelieve in God, yet he acknowledges at times the attraction of our Lord's Human Character; and to speak in the way he has seemed to speak of One whom he cannot but own to be "haply . . . loved past man's utterance," though He was but man, would be blasphemy; so we may give him the benefit of the excuse, and it becomes, instead of blasphemy, strange coarseness and levity. The best mode of studying Mr. Swinburne's religious ideas is, then, to pass by, as far as possible, all his references to Christianity, noticing only that, like his politics, his religious polemics are Continental; for his main idea is that priests are the causes of all evils, and have corrupted whatever of truth or human sympathy was in Christ's teaching, by their dogmas:

The tree of faith ingraffed by priests
  Puts its foul foliage out above thee,
And round it feed man-eating beasts
  Because of whom we dare not love thee,
Though hearts reach back and memories ache,
  We cannot praise thee for their sake.

Like the French unbelievers he sees no distinctions between Christians, but treats all as if they were Ultramontanes, making, it is hardly too much to say, the temporal power of the Pope a pretext for reviling all religion.

As to Mr. Swinburne's own belief, it is somewhat difficult to pronounce, for we have found it very hard to discover what he really thinks. The chief poems in which he gives us his religion, or quasi-religion, are the *Hymn of Man*, *Hertha*, *Genesis*, *On the Downs*, and the Prelude and Epilogue to the *Songs before Sunrise*. In these poems there seems to be a mixture, or rather an alternation, of two forms of belief, a kind of Pantheism, and a kind of Positivism; and again, especially in the Prelude, there is an expression of belief in each man's individual soul, which sounds like an appeal to conscience. Now, clearly, Pantheism is one thing, and Positivism another; and the two are scarcely compatible. In *Hertha* and *Genesis* Mr. Swinburne seems to be trying to describe Pantheism, the spirit or soul which is in everything:

I am that which began;
  Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
  I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

And again, in *On the Downs*, he tells how "in all men love and loathe" there is "one God at growth." But this Pantheism, which is vaguer than is usual even with Pantheism, is more often deposed for the Positivist dogma that man is God, or rather the soul of man, of which all souls form part. This is the thought that is so vigorously and, in places, grandly expressed in the *Hymn of Man*. God, as we know Him, is only the creation of the human mind; and the real God is the impersonal common soul of man:—

Thou and I and he are not gods made men for a span,
But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men which is man.
Our lives are as pulses or pores of his manifold body and breath;
As waves of his sea on the shores where birth is the beacon of death,
We men, the multiform features of man, whatsoever we be,
Recreate him of whom we are creatures, and all we only are he.

Against this human God are set "things," by which we take Mr. Swinburne to mean the outer world, all that is not man, and that man has to contend with:

Things are cruel and blind; their strength detains and deforms:
And the wearying wings of the mind still beat up the stream of their storms.

But man has found freedom, and will depose the God he himself has made, and will conquer death, for—

Men perish, but man shall endure; lives die, but the life is not dead,

and will end by subduing "things":

Glory to Man in the highest! for Man is the master of things.

We do not know that it is worth while to follow the windings of Mr. Swinburne's religious imagination more closely. The strange confusion of metaphysical abstractions and scientific speculations and political ideals, the contradictions between his own notion of "things" which are "cruel and blind" and his belief in nature, which is on man's side in his struggle for freedom, the parodies of Christianity, make the analysis of these poems an unwelcome task. And yet Mr. Swinburne is much read, and expresses with peculiar vagueness, but still with almost unique force, the confused thoughts of many minds. It is well, therefore, that we should know what he thinks, if it can be known. But it is difficult to be patient with it; when we think of the actual state of the world, even as Mr. Swinburne himself describes it, of the sin and degradation and folly and weakness, it is hard not to despise a mind that can be content with declaring that "man is the master of things." We would rather turn to a finer and a truer, though still imperfect doctrine, to that belief in man's soul which is unencumbered with vague metaphysics, or the contest with "things"; and here we may hope we find the poet's real faith:

> But weak is change, but strengthless time,
> To take the light from heaven, or climb
> The hills of heaven with wasting feet.
> Songs they can stop that earth found meet,
> But the stars keep their ageless rhyme;
> Flowers they can slay that spring thought sweet,
> But the stars keep their spring sublime;
> Passions and pleasures can defeat,
> Actions and agonies control,
> And life and death but not the soul.

Because man's soul is man's God still,
What wind soever waft his will
Across the waves of day and night
To port or shipwreck, left or right,
By shores and shoals of good and ill;
And still its flame at mainmast height
Through the rent air that foam flakes fill
Sustains the indomitable light
Whence only man hath strength to steer
Or helm to handle without fear.

Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led,
Across birth's hidden harbour-bar,
Past youth where shoreward shallows are,
Through age that drives on toward the red
Vast void of sunset hailed from far,
To the equal waters of the dead;
Save his own soul he hath no star,
And sinks, except his own soul guide,
Helmless in middle turn of tide.

No blast of air or fire of sun
Puts out the light whereby we run
With girded loins our lamplit race,
And each from each takes heart of grace
And spirit till his turn be done,
And light of face from each man's face
In whom the light of trust is one;
Since only souls that keep their place
By their own light, and watch things roll,
And stand, have light for any soul.

A little time we gain from time
To set our seasons in some chime,
For harsh or sweet or loud or low,
With seasons played out long ago
And souls that in their time and prime
Took part with summer or with snow,
Lived abject lives out or sublime,
And had their chance of seed to sow
For service or disservice done
To those days dead and this their son.

A little time that we may fill
Or with such good works or such ill
As loose the bonds or make them strong
Wherein all manhood suffers wrong.
By rose-hung river and light-foot rill
There are who rest not; who think long
Till they discern as from a hill
At the sun's hour of morning song,
Known of souls only, and those souls free,
The sacred spaces of the sea.

Here let us leave Mr. Swinburne, for this is the utmost height his teaching can attain. And that this is but poor material for poetry after all will only make us wonder the more at the skill and power of the poet. Maimed as it is, however, it is Mr. Swinburne's belief in the soul of man that dignifies his thought, and raises his conception of freedom to an ideal. Freedom is his religion, and it could be a religion only to one who believes that there is a spirit in man that is worthy to be free; and for this faith and for the ringing proclamation of it in poetry we are grateful.

We have said that we wish to notice Mr. James Thomson chiefly as a representative of a different paganism from that of Mr. Swinburne; for it would be absurd to compare the two writers as to their poetical power. Both in quality and quantity Mr. Thomson is obviously inferior to Mr. Swinburne. But there is a tone of sincerity and straightforwardness in his poetry which is often strangely wanting in the artificial mannerisms of contemporary writers. In Mr. Thomson we seem to have returned to the simpler, more direct style of earlier generations, though it is impossible to call him an imitator of any previous

writer. Probably the chief influences that formed his verse were German and Italian rather than English, Heine and Leopardi rather than Wordsworth or Keats. But Mr. Thomson's style is in essentials his own, and we cannot describe it better than by saying that it is a combination of very rich and lofty imagery, with a directness which not unfrequently sinks into baldness, and sometimes into vulgarity. This one stanza will show how powerful and rich such a style can be at its best:

> How the moon triumphs through the endless nights!
> How the stars throb and glitter as they wheel
> Their thick processions of supernal lights
> Around the blue vault obdurate as steel!
> And men regard with passionate awe and yearning
> The mighty marching and the golden burning,
> And think the heavens respond to what they feel.

But we cannot honestly say that Mr. Thomson always writes like this. His devotion to Heine has apparently led him to interpose unexpected pieces of irony or humour in his otherwise serious poems; but we must own that, save for their occasional bitterness, they do not remind us much of Heine. *Vane's Story* is almost utterly defaced by the incongruous mixture of grave and gay, the gay being both bitter and vulgar. In the two Idylls *Sunday at Hampstead* and *Sunday up the River* Mr. Thomson has spoilt a very original and attractive subject by the most commonplace and almost coarse jocularity. He would retort, perhaps, that as a democratic poet he writes of the people for the people, and that if we do not like Cockney merriment we need not read a Cockney poet. But it is because Mr. Thomson is a poet, with

a poet's delicacy and loftiness, that we protest against the intrusion of "Jameson's Irish Whisky," with jocular laudations which are not comic but nauseous, into a poem which in many parts is a revelation of the pure and bright side of many a hidden hard-worked life. The poetry of the vulgar need never be vulgar poetry, as Mr. Thomson himself has sufficiently proved by such lines as these, in which the lover describes the girl coming to meet him on the bridge for their Sunday up the River :

> The strange faces brighten in meeting her glances;
> The strangers all bless her, pure, lovely, and free:
> She fancies she walks, but her walk skips and dances,
> Her heart makes such music in coming to me.

But of course the main interest of Mr. Thomson's poetry lies in such poems as *The City of Dreadful Night*, in which he pours out the full bitterness of the hearts of those

> Whose faith and hope are dead, and who would die.

It is difficult to estimate rightly this and other similar poems of Mr. Thomson's, because though it is by no means an artistic whole, but imperfect and fragmentary, yet the impression it leaves is the impression of the whole rather than of any of the parts. It is therefore difficult to give quotations which shall explain why the poem impresses one; and it is still harder to give a description of the whole which shall do so, for the poem, as we said, is fragmentary. After reading it, we fail to find any one passage which quite comes up to the feeling which the poem has created; we seem to be perpetually just coming to

it, and just missing it. The reason seems to be, that in Mr. Thomson the imagination so overwhelmed the other faculties that both the total unity of the subject and the working out of the details are lost in the dark atmosphere of despair that his imagination could cast round his object. Another instance of what we mean will be found in the hard, dry, weird horror of the stanzas called *In the Room*, where there is no beauty, no thought, no poetry, but sheer imagination revelling in the grotesque terror of the scene it is picturing. We seem to see and feel the chamber of the dead man, and by that impression everything else is obscured and lost. And in *The City of Dreadful Night* the impression of utter misery and heavy despair is communicated more powerfully than in any poem we know, at least of our own country. Whether such an impression be a legitimate aim of poetry we do not wish to decide; at least it may be said that whatever element of beauty there may be in pessimism, Mr. Thomson has displayed it in such passages as that of the Sphinx and the Angel. But pessimism is no new thing, even in poetry; what is new, or at least what is especially powerful in Mr. Thomson's poem, is the impatience of pessimism, the refusal to take the sorry consolation that the secularist offers, the "cold rage" with which even the refuge of death is rejected. He has seen what life might be, and he cannot rest satisfied with his pessimism.

> The man speaks sooth, alas! the man speaks sooth:
> We have no personal life beyond the grave;
> There is no God; Fate knows no wrath or ruth:
> Can I find here the comfort which I crave?

In all eternity I had one chance,
  One few years' term of gracious human life:
The splendours of the intellect's advance,
  The sweetness of the home with babes and wife;

The social pleasures with their genial wit;
  The fascination of the worlds of art;
The glories of the worlds of nature, lit
  By large imagination's glowing heart;

The rapture of mere being, full of health;
  The careless childhood and the ardent youth,
The strenuous manhood winning various wealth,
  The reverend age serene with life's long truth:

All the sublime prerogatives of Man;
  The storied memories of the times of old;
The patient tracking of the world's great plan
  Through sequences and changes myriadfold.

This chance was never offered me before;
  For me the infinite Past is blank and dumb:
This chance recurreth never, nevermore;
  Blank, blank for me the infinite To-come.

And this sole chance was frustrate from my birth,
  A mockery, a delusion; and my breath
Of noble human life upon this earth
  So racks me that I sigh for senseless death.

My wine of life is poison mixed with gall,
  My noonday passes in a nightmare dream,
I worse than lose the years which are my all:
  What can console me for the loss supreme?

Speak not of comfort where no comfort is,
  Speak not at all: can words make foul things fair?
Our life's a cheat, our death a black abyss:
  Hush and be mute, envisaging despair.

This represents, not Mr. Thomson's highest point in poetry, but the interesting element in his thought. Finer poetry he has written, as in some stanzas *To Our Ladies of Death*, and in the really splendid *Lord*

of the Castle of Indolence, in which he shows once more his appreciation of the bright side of life. But we have not space to dwell on these, and must therefore, in conclusion, simply call attention to the startling contrast between these two un-Christian poets.

Paganism like Mr. Thomson's is one of the facts of life which the jubilant paganism of Mr. Swinburne refuses to face. Pessimism may be a false theory of life, but the misery which causes and is caused by it is in the world, and Man, before he can become the master of "things," must master his own despair. The mind cannot but demand a theory of life which shall face, if it does not explain, all the facts; and unless Mr. Swinburne can prove to us that, in the struggle for existence, his paganism will survive, and the paganism of pessimism will vanish, it must be acknowledged that we have some justification in clinging to a faith which is founded upon those very facts that he ignores. We do not appeal to any profound philosophy, but to the simplest and best-known sayings of Christ, when we assert that Christianity is strong and durable because Christ recognized the feelings of despair and misery that have always existed in human nature. The religion which offers rest to the weary and heavy-laden will outlast many systems of hasty and confident optimism, adorned though they may be by the richest fascination of poetry.

THE PAGAN REACTION UNDER THE EMPEROR JULIAN.[1]

IT may be taken as a sign of the different characteristics of English and foreign, especially of German, scholarship, that while nothing is commoner in Germany than monographs on the lives of representative historical persons, in England they are very rare. Our historians have preferred the more ambitious but more hazardous task of writing general histories of whole nations or periods, and have left to the more patient labour of the Germans the microscopic investigation of the lives of those who made the nations or characterized the periods. This is remarkably true with regard to ecclesiastical history. While we have many excellent works, such as Milman's *Latin Christianity*, or Canon Robertson's *Church History*, which give us a general survey of the subjects dealt with, Mr. Stephens' *Life and Times of S. Chrysostom* stands almost alone as a study of one of the great names of the Church, selected as the central

[1] This essay was written in 1880, and was a review of—

1. *The Emperor Julian—Paganism and Christianity—being the Hulsean Essay for the year* 1876. By Gerald Henry Rendall, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge (now Head Master of Charterhouse). Cambridge, 1879.
2. *Geschichte der Reaction Kaiser Julians gegen die Christliche Kirche.* Von Friedrich Rode. Jena, 1877.
3. *Julien l'Apostat et sa Philosophie der Polythéisme. Par H. Adrien Naville.* Paris, 1877.

figure of an epoch. In Germany, on the other hand, such monographs are frequent, and are most useful to the historical student. It is to be hoped that this example may find imitators amongst us. Biographical monographs are more humble productions, indeed, than universal and philosophical histories, but they are more interesting, and, possibly, less misleading. The fact is exemplified by the case of the Emperor Julian, who is certainly one of the most interesting of historical characters, and would, it might be thought, have found many biographers in England. And yet, as Mr. Rendall tells us in his preface, it would seem as if Gibbon's "masterly narration of Julian's successes and failures" had prevented his countrymen from trying to get a clearer and fuller view of his life and character than was possible in the vast extent of the greatest of all histories. So we are especially grateful to the Hulsean foundation at Cambridge for having been the means of producing such a work as Mr. Rendall's, which is a worthy successor to Mr. Mason's essay on *Diocletian's Persecution*, and Mr. Cunningham's monograph on the *Epistle of Barnabas*. If, as Mr. Rendall hints in his preface, the "gentle violence" and "external impulse" of the Hulsean prize is necessary for the production of such studies, we hope that those who administer this and similar benefactions will continue to stimulate the energies of historical aspirants in the direction of special biographical investigation, for there can be no doubt of the value of such a work as Mr. Rendall's. Julian has been the subject of many interesting works both in Germany and France, two of the latest of which stand at the head of our article; but Mr. Rendall's is the first original

English book on the subject since the curious political discussion which was started by "Julian Johnson" in 1681, and which was more concerned with the Divine right or wrong of the Kings of England than with the insignificant question of Paganism and Christianity in the fourth century. Mr. Rendall has well supplied the want. As far as thoroughness of research goes, not even German industry could surpass the completeness of his work, and it shows an appreciation of character which gives life to the whole, and contrasts very favourably with Dr. Rode's patient and piecemeal delineation. On the other hand, it does not, by any undue fluency of generalization, put us on our guard against anticipated inaccuracies and omissions, as too many French writers do ; not, however, M. Naville, whose admirable study of Julian's philosophy is a most valuable contribution to the subject. At the same time we cannot say that Mr. Rendall's work is faultless, though as to errors of detail or mistakes in actual matters of fact, we must own that we have detected hardly any. But there are two points in Mr. Rendall's method and general treatment of the subject that might, we think, be altered with advantage.

And in the first place we will be very bold, considering that we are writing in the nineteenth century, and say at once that it would have been better had Mr. Rendall been less tolerant, or perhaps we should say less impartial. We are far, indeed, from wishing that any modern historian should falsify facts, or omit any element essential to the truth, in order thereby to justify his own prejudices ; such a method of writing history has, we may hope, been at length discarded. Let us have all possible light thrown

upon the actual facts, every means used to discover them and to estimate their due proportion; this is surely the *sine qua non* of historical work. But there is something more required, especially in biography: and that is to present the personages of history as they really lived, to bring them before our eyes as they appeared to their contemporaries, to explain and justify the opinion of their own age concerning them by the very description given of them. A large part, and probably far the most important part, of their historical significance consists in the influence they exerted on those with whom they dealt; and this influence greatly depended upon the opinions, good or bad, which those who knew them formed of them. The biographer, then, if he wishes to give us, not perhaps a living, but even merely a true, picture of his subject, cannot leave out of account the actual impression which the person makes upon our feelings, for that impression is, in all probability, just what was made upon his contemporaries: it is part of the historical character just as much as the actions and sayings recorded of him; and if it is omitted, if, that is, the biographer tries to be completely impartial, not only vigour and life, but truth itself will be sacrificed. To be impartial in judging the truth of the facts related is one thing, to be impartial in judging a character is another. In the first case impartiality is necessary for ascertaining truth; in the second it is not too much to say that we cannot be true unless we are partial: for, as far as history is concerned, the meaning of a character is the impression made upon the feelings of other men; and a mere recital of actions and sayings, leaving out the

feelings of repulsion or attraction with which the character inspires us, is no more true history than it would be if essential facts were omitted from the account. It would seem, therefore, that the modern reaction from the violent intolerance and false partiality of former historians has a danger of its own ; and the careful balancing of facts against each other, the judicial monotony of accent, the nervous shrinking from any expression of praise or blame, tend to produce a dead level of narration, and a finally distorted view of the subject, which may be scientific, but is certainly not history. No doubt in the case of Julian there are strong inducements to a modern writer to fear partiality, for few characters have been the subject of such partisan animus on each side ; but also in no case is it more necessary to allow our feelings of sympathy or antipathy free scope than in this. One great cause of Julian's failure was surely his lack of power to influence others, and this in its turn was due to the dislike and contempt which were clearly felt for him by those with whom he came in contact. The worthy soldier-historian Ammianus, though very fully recording Julian's merits and good qualities, fails to conceal his contempt for the superstitious sacrificer, and for the talkative judge who could not restrain his curiosity as to the religion of the suitors who appeared before him.[1] And the natural hatred of the Christians for the Emperor who tried to reanimate Paganism is mingled with a derision and contempt which are certainly incompatible with any power of either attracting or influencing others. Hence his efforts were not so much feared as laughed

[1] Ammianus Marcellinus, xxii. 10, xxv. 4, xxii. 7.

at, even by the Pagans themselves; his personal following was small, and the effect of his example in observing the rites of his religion almost *nil*, wherever, as in Antioch, there was a strong Christian feeling already existing. When Mr. Rendall, therefore, so carefully avoids all expression of his own feelings towards Julian, and is so ostentatiously impartial as, for instance, in his last chapter, he is really giving us a false idea of the character he has to describe. Julian was gifted with great powers; he was learned, he was clever, he was probably a great general, he was unwearied in industry; but—he was ridiculous and unpopular, and a true historical portrayal should emphasize and justify his unpopularity. In many parts of his book, indeed, Mr. Rendall has avoided this fault, and the very vigour and liveliness of his style are witnesses that his subject is to him a real living person, and not the mere theme for discussion to which Dr. Rode reduces poor Julian. But where he has most aimed at impartiality and complete toleration, there he at once fails to give us a real and true impression of the character.

This would have been less important had he not handled his subject in the way on which, in the second place, we wish to animadvert. Mr. Rendall, it seems to us, has been led away by the common mistake of making too much of his hero and too little of the circumstances in which he was placed. He treats the important historical fact of the definite Pagan reaction too much in connection with Julian, and would lead us to believe that without him it would not have occurred. Therefore, nearly all his book is occupied with Julian himself, and very little stress

is laid upon the popular feeling of the time, except in so far as it was hostile to Julian and his Hellenic schemes. Now, this seems to us unwarranted both by the general course of history and by the particular circumstances of the case. It is not in the power of one man, however great, to bring about a reaction, however slight; and Julian was certainly not the man to do what far more powerful persons than he was have failed to accomplish. Mr. Rendall adopts the words of a writer who, perhaps, was, as he says, "calm and generous," but certainly not unprejudiced, and whose book is singularly one-sided in its support of a preconceived theory. M. Beugnot,[1] who wishes to show that under Constantine and Constantius there was little or no Christian attack on Paganism, and, consequently, no reaction under Julian, says, as quoted by Mr. Rendall, "Julian's life was an accident, and at his death events reverted to their natural channel." By endorsing this Mr. Rendall throws the whole responsibility of the reaction on Julian's shoulders, and thereby justifies his own method of making a study of Julian's character the subject of his book, instead of a full estimate of the positions held by the two parties in the middle of the fourth century. He gives us, indeed, a summary, accurate, so far as it goes, of the religious history of the years between the Edict of Milan and Julian's accession; but for a complete explanation of the facts of the reaction far more prominence should, it seems to us, have been given to the anti-Pagan legislation and popular feeling on the one side, and, on the other, to the great numerical superiority

[1] *Histoire de la Destruction de Paganisme en Occident*, i. 221.

of the Pagan party, and its hold upon the masses of the people, under Constantine and his successor. Julian's life, from this point of view, was no accident, but rather the natural result of the forces which were at work in the Empire; the "natural channel" of events is no unbroken straight course, but an alternation of depths and shallows, rocks and headlands, which produce eddies and under-currents, and render it difficult at any one moment to pronounce upon the ultimate direction of the stream. Reaction is only produced by previous action, and is only, therefore, explained by reference to preceding events.

It is not easy to describe shortly the relative positions of Christians and Pagans during the earlier part of the fourth century. The subject is complicated not only by the difficulty of extracting the elements of truth from the rhetoric of writers like S. Gregory Nazianzen on the one side, and Libanius on the other, but by the great difference that existed between the East and West in regard to religion. In a rhetorical passage,[1] Lacordaire asserted that Constantine left Rome and founded a new capital in the East, in order to allow the Pope to exercise an unimpeded authority in the Eternal City. This view of

[1] *Œuvres*, iv. 170. It is strange to find M. Renan, in his recent *Hibbert Lectures*, reproducing this Ultramontane conception of the religious supremacy of Rome. It is true that at the end of his course he admits that "in the West the Christians were but a weak minority," but immediately afterwards he calls the transfer of power to Constantiople only a "temporary eclipse" of Rome, evidently assuming, as the basis of his whole view of Church history, that the Roman See was, before Constantine's time, the central point of the Church's power and organization. Probably the removal of the capital to Byzantium allowed the Roman See to grow up independent of the Court influence, and therefore to exercise a greater power, eventually, than any of the

history contrasts rather singularly with Beugnot's opinion that Constantinople was founded because of the Emperor's fear of the powerful Pagan party in Rome, and with the undoubted facts that testify to the undisturbed possession by the old religion of its temples, altars, and institutions, and the enormous numerical preponderance of the Pagans in Rome and in the West generally. The popular notion of Constantine's action seems to be that at his conversion to Christianity he at once deposed Paganism from its position as the State religion, and that in a few years it died out altogether and left Christianity in complete possession of the field. There is one fact which very strongly proves, if proof be needed, the falsity of this view. The Pontificate, *i.e.*, the official headship of the religion, which gave complete control over all the rites and ceremonies, over temples and altars, priests and vestals, was part of the Imperial functions for more than fifty years after the conversion of Constantine, and was conferred, not merely by accession to the throne, but as an office distinct and in theory separable from those which the Emperors assumed.[1] The pontifical robe was for

Eastern Churches; but it is most unhistorical to assert, or to imply, that up to the end of the third century the real living force of the Church was in the West rather than in the East. Rome played an insignificant part in the Church's development, whether we regard that development from within or from without, in the growth of organization and of doctrine, or in the contest against Paganism. In Rome the Church was obscure and feeble; in the East it was great and powerful: Constantine, therefore, was most sagacious in transferring his Court from "le camp retranché des païens" to "la ville des idées nouvelles." Cf. Beugnot, i. 85, 86; De Broglie, ii. 138; Mason's *Persecution of Diocletian*, pp. 37*n*, 90, 151*n*.

[1] Cf. La Bastie, *Mémoire sur le Souverain Pontificat des Empereurs Romains.—Mémoires de l'Acad. des Inscriptions*, vol. xv. 75.

the first time refused by Gratian in 383, when it was offered to him by the Roman priests. The refusal was a bitter blow to the Pagan party, and it drew from one of them a punning reference to the contest which the Emperor was then carrying on with Maximus: "Si princeps non vult appellari pontifex, admodum brevi pontifex Maximus fiet." This strictly religious office was then exercised by the declared Christians Constantine and Constantius, to say nothing of Jovian and Valens, as well as by the ardently Pagan Julian. Nor was it a mere sinecure, in the case of Constantine at least; for he passed laws regulating the position of the priests, and commanding the due inspection of the omens and auspices. Besides this he instituted sacred games, though he gave great offence to the Romans by refusing to attend the Capitoline sacrifices, and forbidding the secular games to be celebrated at Rome in 313. The fact that an Emperor who, though unbaptized, was in sympathy a Christian, and presided over the assembled bishops at the Council of Nicæa, was also both nominally and actually the official head of the Pagan religion, is a sufficient proof of the strange confusion and uncertainty of religious affairs during the time of transition. Speaking broadly, we may say that after Constantine's conversion the West remained Pagan, the East became, outwardly, in great part Christian. The new capital was probably completely Christian, if we may trust S. Augustine's testimony[1] that Constantinople was "sine aliquo demonum templo simulacroque." Antioch also was distinguished for its Christian fervour, strangely mixed with luxury and effeminacy, and for its neglect of the

[1] *De Civit. Dei*, v. 25.

magnificent Pagan shrines which it contained. And the general tone of writers under Constantine and Constantius shows that the old worship was, if not openly suppressed, at least very much discouraged, even in Greece, the home of the religion. Constantine had, indeed, at the beginning of his undivided reign, attempted to suppress idolatry altogether, and for a time, at least, seems to have flattered himself that he could succeed. Such is the conclusion we may draw from the two laws mentioned by Eusebius, in the first of which the Emperor decrees the abolition of the "abominations of idolatry," while in the second, addressing the Christians, he assumes that there will now be no obstacle to the triumph of their faith, for "the insanity of Polytheism has been extirpated." No doubt the exultant Christian party at the Court of Constantine thought that they had only to go forward in the course they had already begun in order completely to wipe out the old pollutions of the Pagan system. To those who had watched the gradual growth of the Church, her recovery from persecution, her increasing acquisitions of land and buildings, her gathering numbers, and, lastly, her victorious endurance of the latest and most tremendous trial of Diocletian's persecution, it might well seem that the only thing wanting to complete her triumph was the accession of the Emperor himself to their side; and when that actually came to pass they set no bounds to their hopes and arrogant prognostications. For arrogant enough were these court-bishops, now on the summit of the wave of Imperial favour and worldly success. Few things are more repellent to the Christian reader of history than the descriptions of the

demeanour and conduct of the principal Churchmen of the period in which, for the first time, the spiritual and temporal powers seemed to become united. And their arrogance showed itself in their contemptuous treatment of the old religion, which, corrupt and polluted and foul with many diseases and rank with unheard-of abominations as it was, was yet still the form in which had been cast for many ages all the spiritual strivings, all the vague devotion, all the artistic impulses of great and intellectual peoples. Even for a Christian who knows what a marvellous life there really was in the Church, though hidden underneath the luxuriant growth of hypocrisy and covetousness, and who knows the unspeakable depravity of the Hellenic religion, and how wildly grotesque were the Oriental importations and the fantastic juggleries and pompous incantations which had laid hold of the popular mind, it is difficult not to think that it was ignorant intolerance which led the representative Christians, the bishops and the writers of Constantine's and Constantius' time, to trample upon the still living body of the old faith, and to demand, with persistent outcries, the utter suppression of its worship, its rites, and its sacrifices. It was ignorant, for Constantine very soon found how vain was the attempt to put down by force the ceremonies to which the people were accustomed. The law was either allowed to fall into abeyance, or was actually and formally repealed in the edict in which he deplores "the violent and seditious obstinacy with which many remain firmly in their pernicious errors." Whatever the bishops at his court may have been, Constantine was a statesman, with a statesman's desire for unity and peace, and a

statesman's inclination for using religion as a means rather than as an end. Peace he thought to have obtained by uniting his empire in one faith, and with a wise foresight he selected the young and vigorous Christian religion rather than the moribund Paganism for this purpose; but when he found that this unity could not be produced by a stroke of the pen, or even by external pressure, he retraced his steps, and confined himself to encouraging the Christian rather than suppressing the Pagan worship. And with this encouragement the Church, though torn by internal dissensions, did go forward and prosper in the Eastern portion of the Empire. Only in special cases, indeed, where the immoralities of the Pagan ceremonial were too flagrant, or where, as in the case of the temple built on the site of the Holy Sepulchre, the sentiment of the Christian world was openly outraged, did Constantine himself interpose to destroy temples or shrines by his sovereign authority.[1] But, encouraged by his well-known sympathies, the Christian populace took the law into their own hands, and in many towns flourishing "houses of prayer" erected on the ruins of the temples attested the destructiveness and the piety of a mob of converts.[2]

In the East, then, the decay of Paganism had fairly begun, and its adherents and sympathizers afterwards pointed to Constantine as the first sacrilegious enemy of their faith, the first to light the spark which became a conflagration.[3] But in the West the old religion still maintained its supremacy; altars and temples were

[1] Euseb., *Vit. Const.*, iv. 25, iii. 26, 55.
[2] Sozom., ii. 5.
[3] Juliani *Op.*, i. 424, ii. 54; Libanii *Op.* iii. 436.

still dedicated to the gods; and while Symmachus in later times could appeal to Constantine as an example of tolerance, we learn from the certain evidence of inscriptions that this so-called destroyer of Paganism, this summoner of councils, this arbiter of doctrines, was after his death actually worshipped as a god in Rome—the city which, according to Lacordaire, he left that the head of the Christian religion might have there an unrivalled pre-eminence. Beyond the irritation of the Romans at Constantine's neglect of their games, it would be difficult to say that in the West there was any result of the conversion of the Emperor to Christianity.

Nor was it otherwise in the reign of Constantius. He and his brother began with a peremptory renewal of Constantine's abortive edict against Pagan rites. This was repeated twelve years later in still stronger terms, decreeing the punishment of death against all who were guilty of sacrificing or of worshipping idols. A law directing the preservation of the fabric of some of the temples in which games were accustomed to be celebrated begins with the comprehensive words: "Quanquam omnis superstitio penitus eruenda sit." By such measures and expressions the young Emperors showed their zeal against Paganism, although we are bound to say that M. Beugnot sees in the last quoted edict a mere exercise of the Pontifical functions, and asks, "L'empereur le plus dévoué au paganisme, le souverain pontife le plus scrupuleux, aurait-il pu motiver différemment cette loi?" It must, however, have been a strange devotion to Paganism that could begin a law by assuming the necessity for its destruction; a similar argument

would include Cato among the most devoted defenders of Carthage. What we are told by the laws is confirmed by the evidence of both heathen and Christian writers of the period. The heathen historians and orators give most gloomy accounts of the state of their religion during this reign. In some great cities few could remember the celebration of heathen ceremonies; in others, those who were in the secret knew that the Pagans were praying that their suppressed worship might be restored by means of the accession of some sympathizer to the throne; in others, the Christians were so openly triumphant that the temples and altars were not only closed and forbidden, but overturned and destroyed; and one of the bitterest grievances was that the worship of the gods was suppressed in order that the treasures of their shrines should be divided among the motley crew of eunuchs, barbers, cooks, and servile court-bishops that infested Constantinople and the palace of the Emperor. When an old religion is perishing before the victorious progress of a new faith, it might be expected, or at least hoped, that the leaders of the conquering party should be the best representatives of their creed—those who should display in their own persons the superiority of their system over that which is dying out. But, strange to say, the very reverse of this is shown us by the unanimous testimony of contemporary writers. Constantius' court was a byword for corruption, hypocrisy, greed, and licentiousness of every description, and the foremost examples of these vices were all, apparently, devout Christians. Constantius himself, one of the most despicable tyrants that ever lived, devoted himself with eagerness to the complicated

theological discussions of the time, and by his example and precept increased the manifold distractions and hatred that were tearing the Church and partly disgusting, partly amusing, the contemptuous Pagans. If we do not find the old religion so much persecuted as we should have expected, it is because the Emperor's time was occupied in imprisoning and torturing the best and most loyal adherents of the new. If we are surprised to find Libanius undisturbed in his lecture-room at Antioch, we must remember that the Bishop of Rome was an exile, and the great Athanasius was wandering in the desert of the Thebais, a fugitive with a price on his head. But in spite of the violent dissensions and internal corruption of the Church, the Pagan party was unable to make head against Christianity. Though in Alexandria the worship of the gods still flourished, and in Athens a sympathetic traveller might still find temples which he could visit, and sacrifices in which he could join,[1] yet in most parts of the East the people seemed to be acquiescing in the suppression of their former religion, and looking on without a protest while temples were robbed and altars overturned.

But we can hardly believe we are reading of the same period when we turn to the accounts of Rome and the West generally. Not a word is said by any Western writer of the cessation, much less of the forcible suppression, of sacrifices. On the contrary, in Rome the old ceremonies went on unchecked; the priests and vestal virgins continued their offices, and were subject to their former discipline; the magistrates of the city built and dedicated temples and altars, and

[1] Eunapius, *Vita Proœres.*, p. 491.

took on themselves offices in the service of Mithra, undergoing the Taurobolium and other strange rites, which signified their adherence to that worship. And more strange than all, when Constantius himself visited Rome we find him meekly acquiescing in the Pagan supremacy, and, having just enacted laws for the total suppression of the idolatrous worship, going, in Rome, the round of the great temples and admiring the ceremonies, just as any modern prince would be taken by the municipal authorities to see and attend service in the cathedral, along with the other sights of a city. It is difficult indeed to exaggerate the strange contradictions we meet with at every step during this period of transition between the ancient and the modern worlds. Society was undergoing a great change without knowing it, and even those who were foremost in bringing it about very often failed to see the consequences of their actions, and became, to our eyes, extraordinarily inconsistent and wavering. But the broad distinction may be made that, while the Eastern part of the Empire was gradually becoming Christian, the West remained to a very great extent completely Pagan, not even concerning itself with the growth of this strange organization, the Christian Church. And when we say that the East was becoming Christian, it must be remembered that even there the majority was probably Pagan, and that the success of the Church was owing to the indifference of the heathens to their own religion, rather than to any superiority in force on the side of Christianity. The adherence of the Emperor was the one thing needed to hasten the conversion of many lukewarm Pagans, and it may be conceived that such converts were no very creditable

or powerful acquisitions to the side that gained them. But even in the East this change was not being effected quite silently or without protest. We have ample evidence that those whose wealth or renown depended upon the maintenance of the old religion or its new superstitious accretions, the sophists, the priests, the theurgists, were secretly praying and working for some favourable change in the condition of things at court. They could enlist on their side the passions of the mob when the popular ceremonies and quasi-religious games were attacked; they were supported by the sympathies of men of letters, who saw in the triumph of Christianity the neglect of the great poets of Greece; and, above all, they felt that their own new philosophy was on its trial, that doctrine of Neo-Platonism which, beginning with the lofty and ascetic monotheism of Plotinus, had, by the time of Julian's accession, degenerated into the superstitious and poly-theistic magic which Ædesius and Maximus developed out of the systems of Porphyry and Iamblichus. That this philosophy was a real power during the century between Plotinus and Julian there can be no doubt. Mr. Rendall gives in this third chapter a useful and interesting outline of Plotinus's system. It is important, however, in addition to his exposition, to point out somewhat more definitely than he has done the causes of its influence and of its inevitable failure.

The main longing of the human mind was, at this epoch as at most epochs, for some means of approach to the Divine Nature, some bridge over the great chasm that separates man from God. Those who have cast an amazed and shuddering glance into the fantastic developments of Gnostic systems will

recognize in their endless multiplications of æons an attempt to find some such means of approach; and the Neo-Platonist philosophy was another. By Plotinus the requisite approach was given in "an ecstatic elevation of being," by which the soul "might enter into actual unification or contact with God." This ecstasy was to be gained only by long-continued asceticism, by practice in contemplation, by detachment from the things of flesh and of sense. It is true that, when attained, the Infinite Intelligence was so infinite, so indefinable, so unknowable, that it might seem scarcely satisfying to the soul to be united to it. But the mode of describing God was not so important as the mode of attaining to union with Him, and no doubt many were impelled to lead a higher life, in the midst of the decay and ruin of heathen society, by the motive that Neo-Platonism held out; and the prospect of escaping from the cramped confines of this vexed world into rapturous communion with the One was a quickening principle to many who would otherwise have wasted whatever of good was in them. But though this teaching was calculated to give partial satisfaction to one of the deepest yearnings of the mind, yet it was only partial and temporary. The rapid decadence of Neo-Platonism from Plotinus to Iamblichus shows us the real cause of its inability to give a complete solution of "the great world-problem"; for that decadence consisted in this, that each successive teacher, being at liberty to add whatever he chose to the system, because it had no basis of historical reality, gradually degraded the pure doctrine of Plotinus by incorporating into it popular ideas and legendary fancies, till that which

had once been the strictest Monotheistic idealism became not only completely Polytheistic, but also a system of magical practices and grotesque superstitions. The success, therefore, of Neo-Platonism was due to its recognition of the craving for union with God; its failure was owing to the want of any foundation of historical truth which should control as well as inspire the expositors of its doctrine. Hence there was no check to the fantastic imaginations of subsequent teachers; the very nature of Plotinus' system was the cause of the developments of Iamblichus and Maximus, for while his pure idealism made some concession to popular superstition necessary, if it was to become a popular religion, the arbitrary fancifulness of its doctrines made it easy to introduce any number of theories and practices by which the people could be attracted. As Mr. Rendall well points out, "under Iamblichus the school entered upon a new stage." Philosophy became religion; idealism degenerated into spiritualism; contemplation was exchanged for magic, monotheism for a whole hierarchy of popular divinities; Plotinus gave place to Maximus. This rapid collapse—for the whole development occupies little more than a century—shows that there was a fatal flaw in the system, adapted though it was to some of the religious instincts of man; and that flaw was obviously its want of historical truth. What Mr. Rendall says in distinguishing it from Christianity we may quote as also explaining its failure: Christianity "reposed on objective historical facts, by which it declared God was brought down to man; while Neo-Platonism, from a purely subjective basis, claimed to enable men to rise to God."

Such was, then, the state of the Eastern world about the year 350. The adherents of the old religion were crushed under a victorious Christian minority; that minority itself was racked and torn by fierce and minute controversies; a strange and superstitious system had a certain hold upon men's minds; scholars were foreboding the disappearance of polite learning; the populace were bitterly resenting, in many places, the abolition of their old heathen rites and bright ceremonies; and at the head of this strange medley was a narrow and jealous tyrant, whom it was impossible either to respect or to conciliate. What wonder if the leaders of the Pagan party were eagerly, though secretly, looking out for some instrument by which their supremacy could be restored? And when it appeared that the gods were providing an apt tool for their purposes, we can easily imagine how reluctant they would be to let such a prize slip. At this juncture it was gradually whispered about that, of the two youths who stood nearest to the childless Emperor, one, the younger, was keen and ready-witted, devoted to study, and to study of the old Greek poets and philosophers; and though a Christian, and probably an unquestioning Christian, yet with all the marks of an eagerly inquisitive mind easily swayed by the influence of his teachers, and not unlikely to be powerfully attracted by the weird jargon and spiritual impostures of the theurgists. This was their opportunity, and they resolved to profit by it. The ground had indeed been well prepared. The boy who had been rescued, it is difficult to say how, from the slaughter of all but one of his nearest relatives, would not be likely to have a bigoted attachment to the creed of the foremost

murderer, and Constantius' religion was not likely, on other grounds, to have attracted a naturally devout and imaginative mind. Brought up, almost in daily terror of death from the savage jealousy of the Emperor, by strangers—an Arian bishop, a hypocritical sophist, a Scythian eunuch—Julian had a strange training for his subsequent position; but such a training affords a satisfactory explanation of his mental and religious peculiarities. Mr. Rendall, quite unjustifiably, as it seems to us, shows an inclination to take Julian's sarcastic description of his earliest pedagogue, Mardonius the eunuch, as seriously meant. But this is surely a mistake. Whatever may have been the failings of the philosophical Scythian, Julian was hardly the person to complain of them, seeing how congenial to his mind was the rigid stoicism and pedantry of his instructor; and nothing can be clearer than the irony with which, in the *Misopogon*, he contrasts with Mardonius' severity the gay and theatre-loving character of the Antiochenes. Whether Mardonius' harsh restraint was a wise education for such a nature or not, there can be no question that Julian, considering its results, thought it excellent. His reflections, however, in after-life, on Eusebius of Nikomedia, who taught the boy as much Christianity as could be gathered from the fashionable semi-Arianism of the day, or on Hekebolius the sophist, whose religion varied regularly with the religion of the Emperor, were probably far different. The central point of Julian's character was his strong religious feeling. We see this in his whole subsequent history, in his essays, his letters, and his orations. To such a mind the Christianity of Constantius' Court could have been little short of revolting.

We cannot wonder that he turned from his Christian instructors to bury himself in the study of Homer and Plato, when we remember the kind of teaching which an Arian of that day would give him : the minute verbal controversies, the imperfect system, deprived of all its coherence and all its vitality, the irreverent assumption that human reason is the measure of God's Nature, which would be component parts of the education given by the favourite Bishop of Constantius. A dull and uninterested apprehension of Christianity, and an eager insatiable delight in the wonderful products of Greek imagination and thought, characterized Julian at the time when he was at last allowed to leave his palace-prison at Macellum and to come to Constantinople.

At the age of nineteen Julian was receiving at Constantinople the "training of an ordinary well-educated citizen" ; but it was soon found that he knew a great deal more than his instructors, and also was becoming too prominent a character and too popular to be safe so near the Imperial throne. Learning and intelligence in a prince of the blood did, no doubt, contrast rather sharply with the qualities displayed by the Emperor ; at all events, Constantius relegated Julian to Nikomedia under the charge of the versatile Hekebolius, with a strict prohibition against attending Libanius' lectures. This he ingeniously evaded by reading copies of the lectures at home. The unfortunate scholar whose duty calls him to the perusal of this typical sophist's lucubrations may well marvel, as he toils through the fluent verbiage, how any man, even a clever youth of the ordinary undergraduate age, such as Julian was at this period, could have been

fascinated, convinced, and converted by Libanius. But this was the effect on Julian. Not that we can ascribe the entire result to the sophist. Leaving out of consideration Julian's previous training, the actual process of conversion from Christianity to Paganism was only begun by Libanius; it was finished by the more attractive and mysterious arts of the theurgists Ædesius and Maximus of Ephesus. If there was not a formal conspiracy between the different Neo-Platonist teachers to entrap this valuable ally, their proceedings, as recorded by their enthusiastic historian Eunapius, greatly belie them. Julian was handed on from Libanius to Ædesius, from Ædesius to Chrysanthius and Eusebius. These, while affecting to teach him the loftiest and purest wisdom, mingled with their abstract doctrines grave and mysterious warnings against the delusions of magic and the materialism of some of the professors of Neo-Platonism. This, of course, only whetted the curiosity of the eagerly superstitious youth, and when he was told that Maximus was the man whom he must avoid, because he produced wonderful manifestations, Julian not unnaturally promptly repaired to him, telling Chrysanthius and Eusebius that they might stick to their books, but he would go on to this higher, because more tangible, wisdom. Whether this story be literally true or not, there is no need to doubt that Julian's ardent adherence to Paganism was due to the influence of Maximus, who appears to have been a charlatan of a sufficiently familiar type, with the venerable appearance and lofty earnestness that rendered plausible the rather vulgar and unworthy phenomena of the magical rites over which he presided. The sights

and sounds which fascinated Julian were singularly like the manifestations of modern spiritualism, and in all probability were due to almost exactly the same causes. It is rather melancholy to contrast the undoubtedly religious and philosophical depth and purity of many of Julian's writings with the fact that it was Maximus who converted him, and who was his most revered teacher through life, and his companion in the hour of his death. For there is no doubt that Maximus' philosophy was mere magic, and Maximus' character that of a vain and greedy impostor. Julian's enthusiastic and continuous submission to him reveals the flaw in the constitution of his mind, namely, the want of judgment and common sense which made his life practically a failure.

From his absorption in these pursuits Julian was unpleasantly aroused by the sudden execution of his brother, the Cæsar Gallus, by the orders of the jealous Constantius, and his own summons to attend the Emperor at Milan. Here he was kept almost in captivity, from which he was only released by the good offices of the Empress, and allowed to fulfil his darling purpose of going to Athens in order to study there.

In the ancient University of Athens Julian attained the consummation of his philosophical and religious desires. General culture and philosophy would be stimulated and developed in him by the free intercourse and discussion with other young men, such as Basil of Cappadocia and Gregory of Nazianzus, more than by the sterile course of instruction in the formal pedantry of the lectures which were in vogue at this

celebrated seat of learning. We who have spent years in the study of the art of Latin verse composition must not be too ready to throw stones at those whose attention was occupied with laying to heart[1] "elaborate theories of literary grace"; who "trained their ears to catch the rhythm of each sentence, and to note the significance of accent, and the varying use of anapæst or spondee at the close of every period." Verbal analysis, "rules of synonyms, and homonyms, and paronyms, with all the machinery of tropes and figures," the "stock of commonplaces which could be turned to good account"—all this sounds strangely familiar to those who have once learned to handle their *Gradus ad Parnassum*, and to sound the mysterious depths of epithets, synonyms, and phrases. But even the most bigoted adherent of Latin verses would probably think it better not to make them the sole subject of education, and still less would he do so if they were completely useless for the purpose of learning a dead language, which is now their chief justification. Yet this is hardly an exaggerated account of the state of education at Athens during the period with which we are dealing. Mr. Cape's interesting and amusing work reveals to us the barrenness and folly of the system which was pursued there; and the wonder is that Julian should have cherished such a love for the place after his experience of its real influence. Perhaps it was because his stay there was so short; for though his religious zeal found time to be gratified by initiation in the Eleusinian mysteries, a very short time elapsed before his university life was suddenly terminated by his summons to Milan in October 355,

[1] Cape's *University Life in Ancient Athens*, p. 82.

and his elevation in the following month to the subordinate throne as Cæsar.[1]

This is the important moment in Julian's life. Hitherto he had appeared as the student immersed in books and speculation; romantic, visionary, and ignorant of the world, no one in the whole Roman Empire could have seemed less fit to govern it. But his administration in Gaul, whither he was sent strictly controlled and almost guarded, showed the world that in this dreaming philosopher there was hid a vigour, activity, and perseverance that quickly triumphed over the obstacles which the Emperor's jealousy and the strength of the barbarians placed in his path. In three campaigns he "reduced Gaul and the Rhine provinces to entire submission," and by his vigorous administration "secured a commanding ascendency." All this time his change of religion was unknown except to a few intimate friends, and he conformed outwardly to Christianity in order to avert the suspicions of Constantius, till the force of events and perhaps his own contrivance or that of his friends constituted him Augustus in 360, and in religion as well as policy he was proclaimed as the rival of Constantius. What the five years' Cæsarship had shown was the danger in which Christianity now stood from this formidable enemy. It had shown him to be a strange combination of the philosopher, the soldier, and the ruler; and the qualities which enabled him to be thus many-sided were all subservient to a strong religious feeling which coloured and controlled

[1] The theory of a previous sojourn at Athens would explain the importance of the university life in Julian's history better than the few months in 355, though Mr. Rendall rejects it.—*App.*, p. 287.

his whole nature. And this feeling was completely hostile to the Christian Church.

Mr. Rendall well points out how bounteously Fortune accorded favours to Julian; and not the least of these favours was the death of Constantius at the moment when a collision, the result of which would have been very doubtful, between his Eastern and Julian's Western army was impending. Julian was now sole Emperor; and from December 361 to April 363, when he invaded Persia to meet there his death, the Roman world was given over to an eager, able, and industrious ruler, whose two darling objects were to beat back the barbarians and to restore and quicken the religion of the old gods. With the first object we are not here concerned; how did he succeed in the second?

The joy with which the new Augustus records the unanimity of the army, which followed his lead in religion as in war, the pride with which he enumerates the hecatombs of oxen which on the march he sacrificed to the gods, the religious tone which he gave to what we may call his election manifesto addressed to the Athenians, were sure indications of the general tendency of his reign. The result was instantaneous. All over the East the Pagans returned to their former practices. The closed temples of Greece were reopened, the priests and philosophers whom fear had silenced resumed their functions and their teaching, the people regained their shows and games, and the dishonoured gods their worshippers. It was as though the intervening Christian reigns had not occurred, and we may well believe in the feelings of expectation and pleasure with which the "harassed interests," the

sophists, the scholars, the theurgists, and the hierophants of all descriptions regarded the undisturbed entry into Constantinople of the young hero whose reign was to be their golden age. But Julian was not content with a mere relaxation of the oppressive laws against the Pagan worship. His Christian training and his historical knowledge had taught him what a formidable power he had to contend against, and his deeply religious nature could not be satisfied with a mere rehabilitation of the old state of things, a decaying Paganism and a growing Christianity; he was bent on putting new life into the one and effectually checking the other. The historical importance of Julian's reign consists in this, that it was not a mere reaction, an instinctive almost unconscious reaction, against the unwise haste of the first Christian Emperors, but was guided and modified by a vigorous and religious mind fully conscious of its proposed aim. On no fairer field could the powers of the old and the new religions be opposed; the ancient world with its faith met here in a last clash of conflict with the fresh life of Christianity; and short though the encounter was, it was long enough to show on which side were the forces of the coming age, and the strength that sprang from faith, and hope, and truth.

In reviewing Julian's reign two points are specially noticeable: first, the shortness of that reign; and, secondly, the amount of work which he managed to compress into it. From his accession as sole Augustus to his death was scarcely eighteen months, and what he set before him, in the religious sphere alone, and partly succeeded in accomplishing, was the complete reform of Paganism, even if we cannot, with Mr. Rendall,

describe it as "a federation of all existing cults into a Pagan Church Catholic, realizing its intellectual unity in the doctrines of Neo-Platonism, its administrative in the person of the Emperor, its head." It would be marvellous that so short a reign should have left such an impression upon the popular mind were it not partly explained by the greatness and novelty of the change attempted. He was no ordinary apostate, nor was the reaction, as far as he was concerned, an ordinary reaction; it was an attempt at a religious revival.

Julian was far too wise to endeavour, at least at first, to suppress Christianity by force. His efforts were twofold. Primarily his object was to reform Hellenism, and it is probably just to him to assert that the rest of his religious policy was only means to this end; but as Christianity was an almost insuperable obstacle to his well-meant endeavours, he was forced to devote himself secondarily to undermining and weakening in every possible way the fabric of the Church. Both proceedings were bold and skilful, and are full of interest to us, not less because both utterly failed.

It is strange that a mind like Julian's should have seized with such accuracy upon some of the essential points which made Christianity a living power, and yet have totally missed others not less important. His appreciation of some of the peculiar qualities of the Christian faith is shown by the surest sign, namely, his attempt to transplant them into the system of Paganism. The old religion was, before everything, a religion of mere ceremonial and show; this was its great attraction in the eyes of the populace, and the

philosophical doctrines attached to it were only the fancies of a sect of students. There was, at least at this time, hardly any inner life in the religion; very little faith, and no love. This was the void which Julian tried to fill up. Not content with restoring and promoting, by personal example as well as exhortation, the splendour of the ceremonial worship of the gods, he set himself also to infuse some of the Christian spirit into the hearts of the Pagan sympathizers. He saw that the Church was wonderfully united by the power of charity, and the universal acts of kindliness between believers, and he thought that his Pagan Church would, by imitating this, be likewise strengthened; so his letters to the chief priests whom he appointed and superintended contain instructions for the organization of public charity, and for the establishment of houses for the reception of strangers, even—for his observation of Christianity was in some points very exact—of those who were not Pagans. And Mr. Rendall seems inclined to believe Gregory Nazianzen's hint that "monasteries, nunneries, and hospitals" were established. But of course little could be done with the mass of the people unless this new religion—for it was almost that—could have suitable leaders. Julian's chief imitation of Christianity, therefore, consisted in his regulations for the priests of the various temples. Some of his directions would be no unworthy model for any Christian priest to copy. His principle that "the sacerdotal life is more honourable than the political life" must have sounded strange in the ears of the Romans, and stranger still must have been the directions to priests to abstain from reading the loose books of the comic writers, and

even those philosophers whose doctrines tended towards licentiousness; to pray frequently, "whether in public or in private, thrice a day, or at least morning and evening"; to keep themselves while "in residence" free from all intercourse with the world, devoted only to philosophy; when not officiating, to select their society with caution, and only to visit the authorities "in order to be of some assistance to the poor"; not to frequent but "to leave to the populace the obscenities of the theatre," and to dress in general soberly, but magnificently when officiating. Priests had to set an example of virtue and piety to all, and therefore they must be chosen from the most religious and virtuous men in the city, while their wives and families must also be exemplary in conduct.[1] Mr. Rendall[2] has an excellent passage on the necessary futility of this attempt at sacerdotalism. "By simplest Pagan use a citizen was made priest in the same fashion as he was made magistrate; it was an affair of election; and his tenure and terms of office were similarly regulated." How could such a discontinuous, casual body become a powerful and exemplary sacerdotal caste? Yet nothing less could have been of any avail in revivifying Paganism.

But Julian did not confine his efforts to the priests; he took hints from Christianity also for the improvement of the public worship. Sozomen tells us how the Emperor "introduced into Pagan temples the order and discipline of Christianity," and Gregory supplements this by the practice of penance and the institution of antiphonal singing. Julian's interest

[1] See Julian's *Ep. ad Sacerd.*, i. 548.

[2] Page 254.

in the musical part of the ritual is shown by his directions to the priests to learn by heart the ritual hymns, and by a special letter directing the Prefect of Alexandria to choose boys with good voices, and to educate them in "the sacred art of music." In fact, a great part of Julian's religious and ecclesiastical measures seems most strangely familiar to us; this grotesque copy of Christianity teaches us, in the first place, something of the sacerdotal and ritual development of the Church in the middle of the fourth century, and, secondly, how vain and illusory any external system must be without the inner life which informs and illuminates it. This Julian could not know, for he had never really seen what the true life of Christianity was. His Arian education, and his violent prejudice against the religion of Constantius, darkened his understanding, and the sneers at the worship of a dead man, with which his writings abound, show how utterly unmeaning the name of Christ must always have been to him. Ignorant of the inner life of the Church, he would be all the more inclined to rate highly the ingenuity of her mechanism and the excellence of her organization, and therefore he thought that by simply copying it he could create an equally powerful and living Pagan Church.

But he added the force of personal example to his measures for regenerating Hellenism. Though an Emperor, he remembered that he was also Pontifex Maximus, and therefore entitled to perform all the priestly functions. These he fulfilled almost, as it would seem, to the disgust, and certainly with the ridicule, of his subjects. They crowded to the temples,

not to join with fervour in the worship of the gods, but to enjoy the sight of an Emperor with his own hands performing the humble and rather revolting offices of an attendant on the sacrifices, slaying the beasts, and groping in their entrails for auguries. He was said by his sympathizer Libanius to have divided his life between the State and the altars; and certainly, when we read how in almost every city which he visited his first care was to offer sacrifice at its famous shrines, and to go the round of its temples, we wonder how he found time, as he undoubtedly did, to transact the manifold business of the Empire. It is true Libanius is alone in his approbation of this excessive zeal for sacrificing; not only the Christians, but the calm and impartial Pagan—or at least, non-Christian—historian, Ammianus Marcellinus, openly laughs at his leader for his superstition and "illegitimate" fanaticism. It is curious at the same time to notice that, though so eager and regular an observer of all the ritual of Hellenism, Julian was not superstitious in his theory of external religion, which, indeed, accorded more or less with what all enlightened Christians would probably hold at the present day. Offerings, he says,[1] made with holiness, whether they be small or great, are equal in value; without holiness they are worthless. Here he was only following Porphyry in theory; but whereas the philosopher rejected sacrifices, images, and external symbols generally, Julian held them to be means of reminding us of the presence of the gods, adding, with what is surely great truth, that our corporeal nature renders it necessary that our worship should contain a corporeal

[1] *Jul. Orat.*, vii. 8; *Op.*, i., p. 399.

element. This being Julian's principle of worship, he was enabled by means of it to join with fervour in all the popular practices and ceremonies, both religious and magical. There is a pathetic interest in the numerous passages in his letters which describe the various religious observances which were his continual occupation. It is pathetic with the pathos of conviction and real earnestness; and it is pathetic, because in it he stood alone, surrounded by a mocking and unbelieving multitude. We shall utterly fail to understand Julian's life and character unless we keep in mind the dominant motive, namely, the deep religious instinct which was displayed in nearly all his actions. It was this chiefly, perhaps, though not entirely, which drove him from the fashionable Court-Christianity of his youth; it was this that made him so eager in his efforts to create a Paganism conformed to his ideal of a philosophical religion. Not only do we see in him a firm faith in the supernatural, and a sure trust in an overruling providence, but a genuine and often-expressed love for the gods, which might frequently, with a slight change of phrase, be taken for the equivalent Christian sentiment. The prayer to the mother of the gods which Mr. Rendall quotes[1] is a good instance of this. The climax of the prayer is that he may have "a good hope for the journey that shall bring him to the gods," because "the chiefest element in happiness is knowledge of the gods." And again, he declares that he "trembles before the gods, and loves them, and worships and holds them in awe." But we should notice that the foundation of this deep religious feeling

[1] Page 140.

is no superstitious credulity or unquestioning traditional acceptance, but what seems to us a lofty and pure doctrine of natural religion: "the gods have graven laws in our hearts, by which we know without teaching of the existence of a divine being, on whom are bent our looks and our aspirations, towards whom our souls are directed as our eyes turn to the light." It would be difficult to find nobler and more elevated statements of the relation of man to God than are contained in the writings of Julian, and especially scattered about the orations, though these for the most part are occupied with the development of a system of religion as frigid and unattractive as it was intricate and unintelligible. Mr. Rendall, we should say, gives to the details of Julian's religion greater attention than their importance warrants. Indeed, it would be difficult to say what importance they have, except as one among many illustrations of the wonderful capacity for system-making that man possesses when his reason is uncontrolled by any regard for historical truth. But the vagaries of the developed system must not blind us to the truth and beauty of the fundamental principles from which it sprang, and which, strengthened and purified by the knowledge of the Incarnate Son of God, would have made few nobler Christian heroes than the man whom the faults of the Church of his day turned into Julian the Apostate.

For this is partly the pathos of the situation, that the whole soul of the man was religious, and yet his fate made him the reviver and reformer of a system that was essentially irreligious amidst an irreligious people. In his eager reform of Paganism, Julian stood almost alone. It amused the people, and gave a fresh

sensation to their versatile minds, but as for any sympathy or contagion of zeal there was absolutely none. The Emperor was applauded for the restoration of the games and shows in which the people delighted, and which were often of a character that makes the sober and chaste Julian's share in them rather surprising; he was obeyed when he ordered people to sacrifice, because he was Emperor; but he could not command religious feeling; he could not inspire love for the gods; he could not, in short, bring to life again a dead body. In reading Julian's letters, his melancholy reflections on the decline of piety, his rebukes of the merely conventional religion which was all that he could evoke, and then his continued attempts to make all the heterogeneous fragments of Greek and Oriental legends, of scraps from the poets and selections from the oracles, of baseless philosophy and pretentious magic, into a rational religious system, there keeps ringing in our ears the phrase "a creed outworn," and Julian and his life and his earnestness become no longer ridiculous, but solemn and pathetic. But then, again, we find it difficult to resist laughing with the volatile Antiochenes at the picture which the poor man draws of himself rushing out from Antioch on a great festival to the shrine of Apollo at Daphne, the most celebrated in all that country, looking eagerly for the crowds of humble, devout worshippers, the smoke of countless sacrifices, and the ready gifts offered to the god, and finding, when he got there, a single priest who had brought his own sacrifice, because he could get no other, and that sacrifice, appropriately enough, a solitary goose.

What was the cause of this failure? why was Julian alone in his efforts to restore or revivify Hellenism? The answer may be given in our Lord's metaphorical words; it was an attempt to pour the new wine into old bottles. Julian brought over with him from the camp of the Christians much of their spirit, and what he had not himself got he tried to imitate. But the endeavour to pour this "new wine," this eager, hopeful, philanthropic and pious enthusiasm into the "old bottles" of the Pagan creed and organization, could only have one result: the bottles must burst under the strain. And in truth we believe that Julian only succeeded in making his religion ridiculous; and, except a few theurgists and philosophers, he found no one to sympathize with his devotional feelings. Had he tried to work upon the almost undiminished Paganism of the West, had he appealed for support to the Conservative piety of Rome, he might have succeeded, though it is probable that even the Romans would have resented any attempt to make them extraordinarily devout; but in the East he found nothing but the echoes of a long-vanished faith and the fragments of a disintegrated system. The typical contest was at Antioch. Here the sentiments of the people were completely engrossed by two objects, pleasure and Christianity. Against both Julian opposed himself with all the vigorous obstinacy of his nature. The result is shown us in two remarkable historical relics: the solitary goose, which was the sole fruit of Antiochene Paganism, and the *Misopogon*, that unique satire in which the disappointed Emperor pours out his irritation against the dissoluteness and "impiety" of the Asiatic capital.

Externally, no doubt, there was a considerable revival of Paganism, because it was to the external ceremonies, which we may call religious, but which were very often nothing but scenes of debauchery and obscenity, that the people even in the East were passionately attached. The premature suppression of these by Constantius was now producing its natural result, but Julian was too acute to confuse this reaction with the new and spiritual religious enthusiasm for which he longed. His reign was only of eighteen months' duration, but it was long enough to show that Paganism as a living faith was for ever impossible.

And all the while there stood confronting the apostate Emperor the bitterly hostile power of the Christian Church. Julian dared not, or at least would not, try active persecution. Indirect attack, bribery, cajoling, legal oppression, ridicule, internal dissensions, careful argument, were all in turn relied on to shake the faith of individual Christians and to destroy the power of the Church. But in no instance, if we except the few doubtful cases which alone survive after a critical examination of the various Christian histories and legends, did he resort to actual persecution to attain his object. What might have happened had he returned from Persia flushed with victory and irritated by the continued obstinacy of the Christians it is difficult to say; there are signs that his determination not to use violence was beginning to waver. But we may at least give him the credit of sagacity when history allows us, and history tells us of no actual case of persecution authorized by Julian.

Undoubtedly there is a strong tradition which points

out Julian's reign as the last of the persecutions to which the Church was exposed, and this tradition is not without foundation in fact. But it is clear that, in a great degree, such a tradition would naturally grow up from the mere fact of Julian's apostasy and eager Pagan sympathies; and we venture to say that what there is of truth in the tradition beyond this is due entirely to the popular attacks on Christianity which did occur in this reign. That these were, if not encouraged, at least in many cases condoned, by Julian, is true; it is also true that the Pagan party was incited to attack the Christians by their knowledge of Julian's prejudices, and perhaps by his incautious expressions of contempt and dislike. But, as we have tried to point out, the rash and oppressive attempt to extinguish Paganism in the previous reign was a sufficient cause of the popular animosity against the Christians when the tide turned; for this animosity was displayed chiefly against those who had meddled with the popular ceremonies and their chosen haunts—the temples. Julian afforded a pretext for this by his edict that Christians should rebuild the temples they had demolished under Constantius. It was in the inquiries and trials that arose on this matter that the popular attacks on the Christians originated. When unrestrained or, perhaps, incited by a violent governor, the Pagan crowds committed many acts of brutality in reprisal. But there was no "organized or widespread persecution," and what there was was confined to the East. The popular tradition on the subject shows us what a force of public opinion against the Christians existed in this reign. But Mr. Rendall's patient and accurate investigation points to the true cause of this,

namely, the attacks made by Christians upon the Pagan temples and ceremonies; and it reduces the so-called persecution to its due proportions. It must, however, be owned that Julian's conduct in regard to these popular outbreaks was not straightforward; and, in fact, however we may sympathize with and respect his efforts to promote and purify his own religion, we are compelled to agree with Mr. Rendall in stigmatizing much of his behaviour to the Church as "mean." There was in it a petty spite, an unjudicial partiality, a restless desire to worry, which reveal to us the grave faults in this mixed character. Julian's vanity and his passion for meddling will account for much that we have to reprehend in his anti-Christian legislation and personal conduct. Especially when brought into contact with that greatest of all the early Christians, perhaps of all Christians, S. Athanasius, does Julian show how inferior a great Pagan must be to a great Christian. Julian was totally incapable of seeing any good in Athanasius. He rages against him as the chief opponent to his designs in Alexandria, lavishes epithets of abuse upon him, and, as Gibbon points out, "for his sake alone, Julian introduced an arbitrary distinction, repugnant at least to the spirit of his former declarations." That is, he affirmed that his edict allowing the banished bishops to return meant return to their countries, not to the occupancy of their sees. To incite the Prefect of Alexandria all the more against the great bishop, he closes a letter on the subject with the single word διωκέσθω—"persecute him." In Athanasius Julian saw the personification of the power against which his Imperial wrath and scorn were impotent, the power of the

living faith in Christ as the Head of the Church. Hence his especial malignity against him. If Julian is to be considered as a persecutor of Christians and not merely of Christianity, it must be because of his conduct towards Athanasius.

But we have kept to the last the consideration of three of Julian's methods of attack upon the Church, the first of which is perhaps the one fact of his reign which is universally known. The attempt to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem seems to have been only part of a larger plan for favouring the Jews as the enemies of the Christian Church. In the letter addressed to the Jews in which he announces his intention of rebuilding Jerusalem on his return from the Persian war, he relieves them from certain oppressive charges, and asks their prayers "to God the Ruler of the Universe" for the success of his arms. Whether he really wished to disprove one of the strongest of the external evidences of Christianity, namely, the fact of the dispersion of the Jews and the ruined state of the Temple, it is impossible to say; but there seems to be no good reason for doubting the genuineness of this epistle, and none whatever for disbelieving the fact of the attempted rebuilding of the Temple, though it must be remembered that this took place in the last six months of Julian's short reign, and was perhaps discontinued because of his death rather than in consequence of any supernatural intervention. But here again we have evidence which, if we are ever to believe history, must be credited. It may be worth while to quote the actual words of the most unimpeachable of the witnesses to the supposed miracle which interrupted the building.

Ammianus Marcellinus,[1] a contemporary Pagan historian, writing obviously without a notion of any peculiar importance in the event, declares that "whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged with vigour and diligence the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and the victorious element continuing in this manner obstinately and resolutely bent, as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned."[2] This evidence, supported by contemporary Christian witnesses, is surely as convincing as can be fairly expected. Doubtless there is an obvious "natural" explanation of the fact. Dr. Rode calls the occurrence an earthquake, but it seems to us that a simpler cause, and one involving less of a remarkable coincidence, would be the explosion of the foul air generated in the subterranean vaults of the Temple. This cause, suggested by M. Guizot, would account for the "balls of fire" which Ammianus describes; but we cannot see that the explanation destroys the fact of the miracle. As Butler points out[3] in the case of the continued existence of the Jews as a separate people, the importance of the fact, from a religious point of view, is not the event itself, but its correspondence with prophecy. Had the Jews been enabled, by the favour of Julian, to return to Jerusalem and see their Temple restored to its former splendour, it would have been a reversal, if not of direct prophecies, at

[1] xxiii. 1. [2] Gibbon's translation, vol. ii., p. 389.
[3] *Analogy*, pt. ii., ch. 7.

least of all the anticipations with regard to the Jews which were caused by our Lord's words and by their rejection of Him. The discovery of the means by which, in this one case, these anticipations were fulfilled, cannot, we imagine, affect our recognition of the Hand of God controlling the destiny of this remarkable people. At all events the attempt is a curious specimen of the anti-Christian policy of Julian, and of the manner in which his eager restlessness tried nearly every kind of indirect attack, however obviously futile it might be; and as such we are surprised that Mr. Rendall does not notice it.

The only direct measure with which Julian tried to beat back Christianity was the notorious edict against Christian teachers. Here we are met by a very persistent popular mistake. The earliest Christian historians began, and later writers, even the learned Tillemont,[1] have perpetuated the assertion that Julian prohibited the Christian children from attending the schools. But Julian's object was to induce them to attend, in order that they might be taught the truth concerning the gods. To Julian belongs the doubtful credit of having invented the "religious difficulty" in education. Before his time, as Mr. Rendall[2] and Dr. Rode[3] point out, education had been free from religious proselytism, and was neutral territory between the contending parties. The great University of Athens had hitherto been frequented by Christian as well as Pagan students. State lecturers were chosen by popular election from among the distinguished

[1] x. 1200. Milton also, in the *Areopagitica*, uses language which makes us suspect that he shared this mistake (*Works*, i. 146).

[2] Page 214. [3] Page 67.

Christian orators; and they used as text-books the Greek poems and histories and philosophies, to which Julian looked for sacred counsel and instruction. Here, then, he saw his opportunity; or perhaps, in justice to him, we should say that he was anxious to remove these sacred writings from the grasp of the blasphemous teachers. His celebrated letter, which we agree with Dr. Rode[1] in taking to be an explanation of the apparently neutral law which regulated the election of teachers and lecturers, declares that, as the true religion was derived from the writings of the great Greek authors, it could not be tolerated that Christians who do not believe the religion should expound these authors. Therefore, they must either declare that Homer, Hesiod, and other authors are not false, or else cease to use them as text-books. The result of the law is that Christians must not teach literature, for Julian expressly mentions such apparently secular writers as Thukydides and Isokrates, and thus includes the whole field of Greek learning. This anticipation of M. Ferry's Clause 7 would, if carried out effectually, exclude Christians from the great privilege of elementary and University instruction; and as such it was received with a cry of rage by the Church writers, and even by the Pagans was forcibly condemned. Twice does the calm Ammianus call attention to it as an exception to Julian's general moderation, evidently regarding it as a most uncalled-for interruption to the concordat between the rival religions, which allowed the youth of both persuasions

[1] Page 64 Mr. Rendall (p. 209 *n.*) overlooks Rode's alternative, viz. that it was either a general instruction or an explanation for a particular case. The former seems the most likely.

to meet in the school and lecture-room. Yet it seems a little difficult to account for the peculiar displeasure which this measure has excited. Mr. Rendall accurately states the considerations which make it objectionable, namely, that it was an innovation, an undue narrowing of the freedom of the Hellenic religion, and that it was aimed at a very large section of his subjects; but in his further criticism of it he seems to underrate Julian's belief in Greek literature as a source of religious truth. Once grant that he did actually regard Homer as a religious writer, and quasi-inspired, and it is difficult to help allowing that he had some grounds for forbidding him to be expounded by teachers who must necessarily ridicule the doctrines which they found in him. That Julian did so regard Homer there is no doubt, though his language is not uniformly respectful; and therefore it seems to us that we should, before condemning him, put ourselves in his place, and imagine our feelings, and possibly our actions, were we to hear of Voltaire giving lectures on the Bible to school children, or M. Renan appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at one of our Universities.[1]

Of the third method of attack which Julian adopted against the Christians there is no need to say much, for Mr. Rendall has given a fair summary of the controversial book against Christianity which Julian was engaged in writing almost up to the moment of his death. It is interesting in two ways: first, as showing the limitations of Julian's intellect, and his

[1] Strauss, in his brilliant "squib" against the King of Prussia, sees this inconsistency, and draws his own conclusions, which are, of course, unfavourable to exclusive Christian exposition of the Bible (*Der Romantiker*, p. 40).

utter want of sympathy with Christianity; and, secondly, as anticipating many of the arguments of the Deists of the last century, and the common scoffs of the lower class of sceptics at the present day. As Mr. Rendall points out, "large extracts from Julian's works are well suited to the *National Reformer*, and might even repay translation." In judging this book we should remember that we only possess the fragments of it which an opponent thought fit to preserve; and the very fact that so eminent a writer as S. Cyril should have thought it necessary to answer the book so long after its author's death proves that it must have had considerable weight in the religious controversy; but it is not interesting as an intellectual study, though in so far as it shows us how much in anti-Christian literature is merely repeated from writers like Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, it is important. What are difficulties to us were difficulties in the days of Origen and of Athanasius; why should our faith be weaker than theirs?[1]

All this persistent and ingenious hostility to Christianity had its effect on the lukewarm and hypocritical adherents of the Court religion, and all our authorities agree in representing the number of defections from the ranks of the Church as considerable, though not in most cases important. Time-servers and double-dealers there were then, as always, and it is not to these persons that we must look when estimating the real result of this strange reign. Julian, with his religious zeal, his activity, his learning, his

[1] The reader will find an accessible translation of Julian's fragmentary work in *Julian's Arguments against the Christians*, by Willis Nevins, published by Williams & Norgate.

obstinacy, his versatile genius, at the head of a popular and inevitable reaction, represented undoubtedly a great force; and this must have left some marks after it had passed away. The chief result of his effort, and of the popular feeling with which he worked, seems to us to be represented by the statute-book. Julian's death left religion in the Empire just as Constantine found it. As no law was passed affecting religion till the accession of Theodosius, it is clear that the result of the reaction was to nullify for twenty years, outwardly at least, the anti-Pagan legislation of Constantine and his sons. When we consider what that legislation was, and how bitterly the Pagans in the East regarded it, we shall not be inclined to underrate the effect of Julian's reign. "Twenty years," said Sydney Smith, "are an eternity in politics"; and Julian procured a cessation of religious legislation for twenty years. But the sudden violence of the attack made by Gratian and Theodosius on everything that the Pagans held sacred, the refusal of the Pontificate, the submissive tone of Symmachus and Libanius, the defenders of the old rites, testify that during those twenty years of outwardly unchanged prosperity the silent process of decay was going on in the old religion. The temper of the people must have been inclining more and more towards Christianity, and the Pagans must have seen their altars and temples more and more deserted. It is not too much to say that, but for Julian's reaction, this period of toleration would have abounded in external legislative and executive signs of the internal change that was going on; and each of these would have caused a certain amount of friction, and would perhaps have retarded the final

victory of Christianity by provoking reaction. In so far as Julian's reign taught a lesson of toleration, it assisted the spread of the Church; so far as direct persecution went it could do little to retard it. To the Pagan party in the East the death of Julian was a death-blow. The sophists and Neo-Platonists looked upon his reign as the golden age, and upon him as their last hero. After his death they sink into obscurity, only lifted at intervals to reveal them struggling against their fate in futile conspiracies and magical mummeries suppressed by the law. The defence of Paganism devolved on Rome. Julian had rejected the powerful instrument that was ready to hand in the strong, almost undiminished, Pagan sentiment of the old capital. He had chosen the weaker weapon, the literature and philosophy of the East, and the failure of his attempt turned the hopes of the heathen party to the sacred spot, where, as Ammianus regretfully says, the ashes of the great Julian ought to lie, for there "they might be washed by the waters of the Tiber as it flows through the Eternal City, and winds round the statues of the ancient gods." The proper home of a Pagan ruler was in Pagan Rome, and Julian had failed partly because he had not recognized this.

But whatever weapons he fought with, whether he relied on the Conservative pride of Rome, or on the changeful philosophies of Greece, the result must have been almost the same. Julian struggled with an indomitable will, but with feeble strength, against the youthful might of a new world, and he fell before it. Mr. Rendall justly tells us that "Christianity was at this time consciously the winning religion," and

its treatment of Julian was contemptuous and secure. Some influence his opposition certainly had upon the divisions and quarrels of the Church: in face of the unexpected enemy the Christians closed their ranks, and for a moment forgot their disputes.[1] But only for a moment; the Arian controversy was not stopped by Julian's reign; it continued all through his time, and was not less bitter after his death. Such a brief reaction could not have much effect on a contest which was a profoundly important, and perhaps necessary, moment in the historical development of the Church's life and thought; and only those writers who, like Gregory, were brought into personal contact with Julian were able to turn aside from the absorbing doctrinal discussion to oppose or to triumph over the Pagan Emperor.

Christianity was not to be stopped in its progress by any emperor, great even as Julian; and the actual results of the reaction in his reign were short-lived. A period of eighteen months, even though it summed up and expressed the secret workings of many years, could not have an enduring effect on the world's history in the face of the two vast movements which it opposed. The work of Julian's life was to drive back the barbarians and to reinstate Paganism; before fifty years had passed Alaric the Goth had encamped before Rome, and the old religion had lost for ever its priests, its wealth, and its public rites.

Thus, though we have blamed Mr. Rendall for ascribing too much to Julian's personal influence, yet

[1] Cf. Gregory Nazianzen's praise of the Arian Constantius (*Orat.*, iii. 35-39), and of the Arian bishops, Mark of Arethusa and Maris of Chalcedon (*Ibid.*, 82).

we must own that the error is a natural one. The interest of this period centres round this unique figure, this personality that emerges so clearly from the dim crowd of strange and unholy creatures that surround it. The vividness with which we distinguish this form and character accounts in part for the sense of the ridiculous which is unavoidable when we look at it; for we can only laugh at what we know well. But, as usual, the humour of the character lies very close to the pathos; for both humour and pathos spring from the incongruity which was manifested in Julian's life: the incongruity of a lofty ideal and noble qualities with despicable means and an unredeemed failure; and the incongruity of the two elements in his nature, which it was the misery of his epoch to be unable to harmonize, namely, his yearning for the beautiful past, and his high and eager aspiration for a pure religion. "The pathetic destiny was that of men like Julian or Porphyry, men who were disqualified from leading the race onward into a noble future, merely because they so well knew and loved an only less noble past." [1] Julian was made imperfect, restless, ridiculous, futile, by the unresolved discord between these two instincts in his nature, and by the isolation of his position. To whichever party he turned, he found himself alone. From the Christians he was separated by his early prejudices, by his personal defects of vanity and self-consciousness, and by his strong classical and literary sympathies; from the Pagans, whom he had to lead, and tried in vain to quicken, he was still more widely severed by his religious fervour and pure morality.

[1] F. W. Myers on Greek Oracles, *Hellenica*, p. 485.

He stands where the old and the new worlds meet in conflict, and is in harmony with neither. "L'ancien monde et le monde nouveau repoussèrent Julien ; l'un dans sa décrépitude eût vainement essayé de se redresser comme un jeune homme ; l'autre, adolescent vigoureux, ne se put rabougrir en vieillard." [1]

We cannot join in the savage attacks on the memory of Julian the Apostate which it was formerly the fashion for Christian writers to make, though we hope we have indicated clearly enough the faults in his character and the causes of his failure. Still, even after fifteen hundred years, we can trace the outlines of a noble personality, obscured though it be by superstition, by vanity, by want of dignity, by affectation, and by intellectual arrogance. That this noble personality was not retained on the Church's side was, we believe, chiefly owing to the faults of the Church herself and to the vices of his education ; but we can never absolve Julian from the charge of a culpable misunderstanding of the forces of the world, and the clear distinction between the dead and the living, Paganism and Christianity. The religion which Julian tried to revive had been a living faith to millions, and we need not be afraid to own that it must, therefore, have had in it some truth, something to satisfy the undying wants of the human soul; but this had long vanished from it, and the failure to see this was Julian's fault. It was a fault which brought with it its own punishment, for his life was wasted in the fruitless effort to galvanize the dead body of the old faith. He might have been warned by his own oracle, or, if that story be a fable,

[1] Chateaubriand, *Études Historiques.*

he might have learnt the lesson from every ruined temple and shrine, every forsaken altar that he saw—

> εἴπατε τῷ βασιλῆϊ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά·
> οὐκέτι Φοῖβὸς ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
> οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσαν· ἀπέσβετο γὰρ λάλον ὕδωρ.

And we are taught by Julian's example that, though reactions are necessary factors in the world's progress, yet the attempt to infuse an artificial strength into them, to make them express anything more than the natural reluctance of man to being unduly hurried along his path, must always be, sooner or later, a failure. Whether the reaction be towards archaic religions, or Greek art, or *Renaissance* paganism, or mediæval philosophy, it must be in vain if the inspiring principle of that which it copies has departed. Julian thought to recall the vanished glories of the Greek Religion, to bring back to their temples and their worshippers the splendid forms of the gods and heroes of the former faith ; but the effort was foredoomed to failure, for the spiritual life was gone out of the religion, and the revived system was but a feeble reflection of the noble and gracious legends and beliefs that had made the Hellenic creed a real resting-place for the human soul :

> Very pale ye seem to rise,
> Ghosts of Grecian deities,
> Now Pan is dead.

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